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THE

WORKS

OF

WILLIAM COWPER.

COMPRISING

HIS POEMS,

CORRESPONDENCE, AND TRANSLATIONS.

WITH

A LIFE OF THE AUTHOR

BY THE EDITOR,

ROBERT SOUTHEY, LL.D.

POET LAUREATE, ETC.

ILLUSTRATED WITH FIFTY FINE ENGRAVINGS.

IN EIGHT VOLUMES.

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THE

LETTERS

OF

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Jan. 11, 1783.

On Thursday evening Mr. Raban drank tea with us; he brought us a barrel of pickled oysters, for which we return our thanks, and the agreeable news of your welfare, in which we rejoice. He arrived brimfull of admiration at the wonderful performances of a certain soothsayer, whom I recollect you mentioned when we saw you at Olney. I do not, I hope, offend against the law of charity in my judgement of this man; to say truth, I account him rather an object of pity than censure; but as to the intelligence with which he is furnished, it seems to be derived merely from a spirit of divination. We know that, in old time, persons influenced by such a spirit were ready enough to bear testimony to the Apostles and their doctrine, but they refused the testimony and rebuked the spirit. His extraordinary remembrance and application of Scripture therefore do not seem to warrant his pretensions to any higher character than that of a diviner. An opinion I am the more confirmed in when I recollect that he is ambitious to be thought an intimate friend of the Angel Gabriel, and that he calls Christ his Brother and God his Father in a style of familiarity that seems to bespeak no small share of spiritual pride and vanity. Mr. Raban admired his interpretation of some scriptures relating to the day of judgement, and gave him credit for having placed them in a new light; but in our opinion that light was darkness, inasmuch as it was derogatory from the honour of the Judge, and contrary to the tenor of every passage that speaks of him in that office. But perhaps I have a heavier charge than any of these to allege against Mr. Best, or at least his oracle. A woman of most infamous character, too vile for description, had the curiosity to visit him; he examined her palm as usual, and pronounced her little less than an angel. He was even so enamoured of her that he was with——

Cætera desunt.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, Jan. 19, 1783.

NOT to retaliate, but for want of opportunity, I have delayed writing. From a scene of the most uninterrupted retirement, we have passed at once into a state of constant engagement; not that our society is much multiplied,—the addition of an individual has made all this difference. Lady Austen and we pass our days alternately at each other's *chateau*. In the morning I walk with one or other of the ladies, and in the afternoon wind thread. Thus did Hercules, and thus probably did Samson, and thus do I; and were both those heroes living, I should not fear to challenge them to a trial of skill in that business, or doubt to beat them both. As to killing lions, and other amusements of that kind, with which they were so delighted, I should be their humble servant, and beg to be excused.

Having no frank, I cannot send you Mr. Smith's two letters as I intended. We corresponded as long as the occasion required, and then ceased. Charmed with his good sense, politeness, and liberality to the poor, I was indeed ambitious of continuing a correspondence with him, and told him so. Perhaps I had done more prudently had I never proposed it. But warm hearts are not famous for wisdom, and mine was too warm to be very considerate on such an occasion. I have not heard from him since, and have long given up all expectation of it. I know he is too busy a man to have leisure for me, and ought to have recollected it sooner. He found time to do much good, and to employ us as his agents in doing it, and that might have satisfied me. Though laid under the strictest injunctions of secrecy, both by him, and by you on his behalf, I consider myself as under no obligation to conceal from you the remittances he made. Only, in my turn, I beg leave to request secrecy on your part, because, intimate as you are with him, and highly as he values you, I cannot yet be sure that the communication would please him, his delicacies on this subject being as singular as his benevolence. He sent forty pounds, twenty at a time. Olney has not had such a friend this many a day; nor has there been an instance at any time of a few poor families so effectually relieved, or so completely encouraged to the pursuit of that honest industry by which, their debt being paid, and the parents and children comfortably clothed

they are now enabled to maintain themselves. Their labour was almost in vain before; but now it answers; it earns them bread, and all their other wants are plentifully supplied.

I wish, that by Mr. Bate's assistance, your purpose in behalf of the prisoners may be effectuated. A pen so formidable as his might do much good, if properly directed. The dread of a bold censure is ten times more moving than the most eloquent persuasion. They that cannot feel for others, are the persons of all the world who feel most sensibly for themselves.

Yours, my dear friend, W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Jan. 26, 1783.

It is reported among persons of the best intelligence at Olney —the barber, the schoolmaster, and the drummer of a corps quartered at this place, that the belligerent powers are at last reconciled, the articles of the treaty adjusted, and that peace is at the door. I saw this morning, at nine o'clock, a group of about twelve figures very closely engaged in a conference, as I suppose, upon the same subject. The scene of consultation was a blacksmith's shed, very comfortably screened from the wind, and directly opposed to the morning sun. Some held their hands behind them, some had them folded across their bosom, and others had thrust them into their breeches pockets. Every man's posture bespoke a pacific turn of mind; but the distance being too great for their words to reach me, nothing transpired. I am willing, however, to hope that the secret will not be a secret long, and that you and I, equally interested in the event, though not, perhaps, equally well-informed, shall soon have an opportunity to rejoice in the completion of it. The powers of Europe have clashed with each other to a fine purpose; that the Americans, at length declared independent, may keep themselves so, if they can; and that what the parties, who have thought proper to dispute upon that point, have wrested from each other in the course of the conflict, may be, in the issue of it, restored to the proper owner. Nations may be guilty of a conduct that would render an individual infamous for ever; and yet carry their heads high, talk of their glory, and despise their neighbours. Your opinions and mine, I mean our political ones, are not exactly of a piece, yet I cannot think otherwise upon this subject than I have always done. England, more, perhaps, through the fault of her generals,

than her councils, has in some instances acted with a spirit of cruel animosity she was never chargeable with till now. But this is the worst that can be said. On the other hand, the Americans, who, if they had contented themselves with a struggle for lawful liberty, would have deserved applause, seem to me to have incurred the guilt of parricide, by renouncing their parent, by making her ruin their favourite object, and by associating themselves with their worst enemy, for the accomplishment of their purpose. France, and of course Spain, have acted a treacherous, a thievish part. They have stolen America from England, and whether they are able to possess themselves of that jewel or not hereafter, it was doubtless what they intended. Holland appears to me in a meaner light than any of them. They quarelled with a friend for an enemy's sake. The French led them by the nose, and the English have threshed them for suffering it. My views of the contest being, and having been always such, I have consequently brighter hopes for England than her situation some time since seemed to justify. She is the only injured party. America may, perhaps, call her the aggressor; but if she were so, America has not only repelled the injury, but done a greater. As to the rest, if perfidy, treachery, avarice, and ambition, can prove their cause to have been a rotten one, those proofs are found upon them. I think, therefore, that whatever scourge may be prepared for England, on some future day, her ruin is not yet to be expected.

Acknowledge, now, that I am worthy of a place under the shed I described, and that I should make no small figure among the *quidnuncs* of Olney.

I wish the society you have formed may prosper. Your subjects will be of greater importance, and discussed with more sufficiency. The earth is a grain of sand, but the spiritual interests of man are commensurate with the heavens.

Pray remind Mr. Bull, who has too much genius to have a good memory, that he has an account to settle for Mrs. Unwin with her grocer, and give our love to him. Accept for yourself and Mrs. Newton your just share of the same commodity, with our united thanks for a very fine barrel of oysters. This, indeed, is rather commending the barrel than its contents. I *should* say, therefore, for a barrel of very fine oysters.

Yours, my dear friend, as ever, W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Feb. 2, 1783.

I GIVE you joy of the restoration of that sincere and firm friendship between the Kings of England and France, that has been so long interrupted. It is great pity, when hearts so cordially united are divided by trifles. Thirteen pitiful colonies, which the King of England chose to keep, and the King of France to obtain, if he could, have disturbed that harmony which would else, no doubt, have subsisted between those illustrious personages to this moment. If the King of France, whose greatness of mind is only equalled by that of his Queen, had regarded them, unworthy of his notice as they were, with an eye of suitable indifference; or, had he thought it a matter deserving in any degree his princely attention, that they were, in reality, the property of his good friend the King of England; or, had the latter been less obstinately determined to hold fast his interest in them; and could he, with that civility and politeness in which monarchs are expected to excel, have entreated his Majesty of France to accept a bagatelle, for which he seemed to have conceived so strong a predilection, all this mischief had been prevented. But monarchs, alas! crowned and sceptred as they are, are yet but men; they fall out, and are reconciled, just like the meanest of their subjects. I cannot, however, sufficiently admire the moderation and magnanimity of the King of England. His dear friend on the other side of the channel has not indeed taken actual possession of the colonies in question, but he has effectually wrested them out of the hands of their original owner; who, nevertheless, letting fall the extinguisher of patience upon the flame of his resentment, and glowing with no other flame than that of the sincerest affection, embraces the King of France again, gives him Senegal and Goree in Africa, gives him the islands he had taken from him in the West, gives him his conquered territories in the East, gives him a fishery upon the banks of Newfoundland; and, as if all this were too little, merely because he knows that Louis has a partiality for the King of Spain, gives to the latter an island in the Mediterranean, which thousands of English had purchased with their lives; and, in America, all that he wanted, at least all that he could ask. No doubt there will be great cordiality between this royal trio for the future: and though *wars may perhaps* be kindled between their pos-

terity, some ages hence, the present generation shall never be witnesses of such a calamity again. I expect soon to hear that the Queen of France, who, just before this rupture happened, made the Queen of England a present of a watch, has, in acknowledgment of all these acts of kindness, sent her also a seal wherewith to ratify the treaty. Surely she can do no less.

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Feb. 8, 1783.

WHEN I contemplate the nations of the earth, and their conduct towards each other, through the medium of scriptural light, my opinions of them are exactly like your own. Whether they do good or do evil, I see them acting under the permission or direction of that Providence who governs the earth, whose operations are as irresistible as they are silent and unsuspected. So far we are perfectly agreed; and howsoever we may differ upon inferior parts of the subject, it is, as you say, an affair of no great consequence. For instance, you think the peace a better than we deserve, and in a certain sense I agree with you: as a sinful nation we deserve no peace at all, and have reason enough to be thankful that the voice of war is at any rate put to silence. But when I consider the peace as the work of our ministers, and reflect that with more wisdom, or more spirit, they might perhaps, have procured a better, I confess it does not please me. Such another peace would ruin us, I suppose, as effectually as a war protracted to the extremest inch of our ability to bear it. I do not think it just that the French should plunder us, and be paid for doing it; nor does it appear to me that there was an absolute necessity for such tameness on our part, as we discover in the present treaty. We give away all that is demanded, and receive nothing but what was our own before. So far as this stain upon our national honour, and this diminution of our national property, are a judgement upon our iniquities, I submit, and have no doubt but that ultimately it will be found to be judgement mixed with mercy. But so far as I see it to be the effect of French knavery and British despondency, I feel it as a disgrace, and grumble at it as a wrong. I dislike it the more, because the peacemaker has been so immoderately praised for his performance, which is, in my opinion, a contemptible one enough.

Had he made the French smart for their baseness, I would have praised him too;—a minister should have shown his wisdom by securing some points, at least, for the benefit of his country. A schoolboy might have made concessions. After all, perhaps, the worst consequence of this awkward business will be dissension in the two Houses, and dissatisfaction throughout the kingdom. They that love their country, will be grieved to see her trampled upon; and they that love mischief will have a fair opportunity of making it. Were I a member of the Commons, even with the same religious sentiments as impress me now, I should think it my duty to condemn it.

You will suppose me a politician; but in truth I am nothing less. These are the thoughts that occur to me while I read the newspaper; and when I have laid it down, I feel myself more interested in the success of my early cucumbers, than in any part of this great and important subject. If I see them droop a little, I forget that we have been many years at war; that we have made an humiliating peace; that we are deeply in debt, and unable to pay. All these reflections are absorbed at once in the anxiety I feel for a plant, the fruit of which I cannot eat, when I have procured it. How wise, how consistent, how respectable a creature is man!

Because we have nobody to preach the gospel at Olney, Mr. Chater waits only for a barn, at present occupied by a strolling company; and the moment they quit it, he begins. He is disposed to think the dissatisfied of all denominations may possibly be united under his standard; and that the great work of forming a more extensive and more established interest than any of them, is reserved for him.

Mrs. Unwin thanks Mrs. Newton for her kind letter, and for executing her commissions. She means to answer next week, by the opportunity of a basket of chickens. We truly love you both, think of you often, and one of us prays for you;—the other will, when he can pray for himself. W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Feb. 13, and 20, 1783.

In writing to you I never want a subject. Self is always at hand, and self with its concerns is alway interesting to a friend.

You may think, perhaps, that having commenced poet by profession, I am always writing verses. Not so. I have written nothing, at least finished nothing, since I published, except a certain facetious history of John Gilpin, which Mr. Unwin would send to the Public Advertiser. Perhaps you might read it without suspecting the author.

My book procures me favours, which my modesty will not permit me to specify, except one which, modest as I am, I cannot suppress,—a very handsome letter from Dr. Franklin at Passy. These fruits it has brought me.

I have been refreshing myself with a walk in the garden, where I find that January (who according to Chaucer was the husband of May) being dead, February has married the widow.

Yours, &c. W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Olney, Feb. 20, 1783.

SUSPECTING that I should not have hinted at Dr. Franklin's encomium under any other influence than that of vanity, I was several times on the point of burning my letter for that very reason. But not having time to write another by the same post, and believing that you would have the grace to pardon a little self-complacency in an author on so trying an occasion, I let it pass. One sin naturally leads to another, and a greater; and thus it happens now, for I have no way to gratify your curiosity, but by transcribing the letter in question. It is addressed, by the way, not to me, but to an acquaintance of mine, who had transmitted the volume to him without my knowledge.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

GREAT revolutions happen in this Ant's nest of ours. One emmet of illustrious character and great abilities pushes out another; parties are formed, they range themselves in formidable opposition, they threaten each other's ruin, they cross over and are mingled together, and like the coruscations of the Northern Aurora amuse the spectator, at the same time that by some they are supposed to be forerunners of a general dissolution.

There are political earthquakes as well as natural ones, the

former less shocking to the eye, but not always less fatal in their influence than the latter. The image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream was made up of heterogeneous and incompatible materials, and accordingly broken. Whatever is so formed must expect a like catastrophe.

I have an etching of the late Chancellor hanging over the parlour chimney. I often contemplate it, and call to mind the day when I was intimate with the original. It is very like him, but he is disguised by his hat, which, though fashionable, is awkward; by his great wig, the tie of which is hardly discernible in profile; and by his band and gown, which give him an appearance clumsily sacerdotal. Our friendship is dead and buried, yours is the only surviving one of all with which I was once honoured. Adieu, W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Feb. 24, 1783.

A WEAKNESS in one of my eyes may possibly shorten my letter, but I mean to make it as long as my present materials, and my ability to write, can suffice for.

I am almost sorry to say that I am reconciled to the peace, being reconciled to it not upon principles of approbation, but necessity. The deplorable condition of the country, insisted on by the friends of administration, and not denied by their adversaries, convinces me, that our only refuge under Heaven was in the treaty with which I quarrelled. The treaty itself I find less objectionable than I did, Lord Shelburne having given a colour to some of the articles that makes them less painful in the contemplation. But my opinion upon the whole affair is, that now is the time (if indeed there is salvation for the country) for Providence to interpose to save it. A peace with the greatest political advantages would not have healed us; a peace with none may procrastinate our ruin for a season, but cannot ultimately prevent it. The prospect may make all tremble who have no trust in God, and even they that trust may tremble. The peace will probably be of short duration; and, in the ordinary course of things; another war must end us. A great country in ruins will not be beheld with eyes of indifference, even by those who have a better country to look to. But with them all will be well at last.

As to the Americans, perhaps I do not forgive them as I

ought; perhaps I shall always think of them with some resentment as the destroyers,—intentionally the destroyers, of this country. They have pushed that point farther than the house of Bourbon could have carried it in half a century. I may be prejudiced against them, but I do not think them equal to the task of establishing an empire. Great men are necessary for such a purpose; and their great men, I believe, are yet unborn. They have had passion and obstinacy enough to do us much mischief; but whether the event will be salutary to themselves or not, must wait for proof. I agree with you, that it is possible America may become a land of extraordinary evangelical light; but, at the same time, I cannot discover any thing in their new situation peculiarly favourable to such a supposition. They cannot have more liberty of conscience than they had; at least, if that liberty was under any restraint, it was a restraint of their own making. Perhaps a new settlement in church and state may leave them less. Well,—all will be over soon. The time is at hand when an empire will be established that shall fill the earth. Neither statesmen nor generals will lay the foundation of it, but it shall rise at the sound of the trumpet.

Mr. Scott's last child is dead,—died this morning at four o'clock. The great blemish it had in its face made it a desirable thing that it should not live; and a virulent humour, which consumed the flesh from the bones, made it desirable that it should die soon. It lived a little time in a world of which it knew nothing, and is gone to another, in which it is already become wiser than the wisest it has left behind.

Our united thanks both for the worsted and the satin; they are remarkably well dyed; the former arrived in the shape of a pair of breeches.

I am well in body, but with a mind that would wear out a frame of adamant; yet upon *my* frame, which is not very robust, its effects are not discernible. Mrs. Unwin is in health. Accept our unalienable love to you both.

Yours, my dear friend, truly, W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM BULL.

MY DEAR FRIEND, March 7, 1783.

WHEN will you come and tell us what you think of the peace? *Is it a good peace* in itself, or a good peace only in reference

to the ruinous condition of our country? I quarrelled most bitterly with it at first, finding nothing in the terms of it but disgrace and destruction to Great Britain. But having learned since, that we are already destroyed and disgraced, as much as we can be, I like it better, and think myself deeply indebted to the King of France for treating us with so much lenity. The olive-branch, indeed, has neither leaf nor fruit, but it is still an olive-branch. Mr. Newton and I have exchanged several letters on the subject; sometimes considering, like grave politicians as we are, the state of Europe at large; sometimes the state of England in particular; sometimes the conduct of the House of Bourbon; sometimes that of the Dutch; but most especially that of the Americans. We have not differed perhaps very widely, nor even so widely as we seemed to do; but still we have differed. We have, however, managed our dispute with temper, and brought it to a peaceable conclusion. So far, at least, we have given proof of a wisdom which abler politicians than myself would do well to imitate.

How do you like your northern mountaineers? Can a man be a good Christian that goes without breeches? You are better qualified to solve me this question than any man I know, having, as I am informed, preached to many of them, and conversed, no doubt, with some. You must know, I love a Highlander, and think I can see in them what Englishmen once were, but never will be again. Such have been the effects of luxury!

You know that I kept two hares. I have written nothing since I saw you but an epitaph on one of them, which died last week. I send you the *first* impression of it.

Believe me, my dear friend, Affectionately yours, W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, March 7, 1783.

WERE my letters composed of materials worthy of your acceptance, they should be longer. There is a subject upon which they who know themselves interested in it are never weary of writing. That subject is not within my reach; and there are few others that do not soon fatigue me. Upon these, however, I might possibly be more diffuse, could I forget that I am writing to *you*, to whom I think it just as improper and absurd to send a sheet full of trifles, as it would be to allow

myself that liberty, were I writing to one of the four Evangelists. But since you measure *me* with so much exactness, give me leave to requite you in your own way. *Your* manuscript, indeed, is close, and I do not reckon *mine* very lax. You make no margin, it is true; if you did you would have need of their Lilliputian art, who can enclose the creed within the circle of a shilling; for, upon the nicest comparison, I find your paper an inch smaller every way than mine. Were my writing, therefore, as compact as yours, my letters *with* a margin would be as long as yours without one. Let this consideration, added to that of their futility, prevail with you to think them, if not long, yet long enough.

Corporal East has paid us two visits. We thank you for recommending it to him to call: he entertained us agreeably with a very modest, though, at the same time, a very extraordinary narrative of his Christian adventures in the camp. Twice he prayed here, and in his prayers and in his conversation discovered a vein of good sense not common in people of his rank, and a warmth of heart peculiar to persons truly spiritual. The poor fellow, not having received his pay, found himself in some distress, and would have been obliged to have left some part of his slender means in pawn at his quarters, had we not supplied him with half a guinea. He marched for Northampton yesterday.

Yesterday, a body of Highlanders passed through Olney. They are part of that regiment which lately mutinied at Portsmouth. Convinced to a man, that General M—— had sold them to the East India Company, they breathe nothing but vengeance, and swear they will pull down his house in Scotland, as soon as they arrive there. This determination is, no doubt, a very unchristian one; but, as men, if their charge against the General be well supported, I cannot blame them. The rest of them are quartered at Dunstable, Woburn, and Newport; in all eleven hundred. A party of them, it is said, are to continue some days at Olney. None of their principal officers are with them; either conscious of guilt, or, at least, knowing themselves to be suspected as privy to, and partners in, the iniquitous bargain, they fear the resentment of the corps. The design of government seems to be to break them into small *divisions*, that they may find themselves, when they reach Scot-

land, too weak to do much mischief. Forty of them attended Mr. Bull, who found himself singularly happy in an opportunity to address himself to a flock bred upon the Caledonian mountains. He told them he would walk to John O'Groat's house to hear a soldier pray. They are in general so far religious, that they will hear none but evangelical preaching; and many of them are said to be truly so. Nevertheless, General M——'s skull was in some danger among them; for he was twice felled to the ground with the butt-end of a musket. The sergeant-major rescued him, or he would have been for ever rendered incapable of selling Highlanders to the India Company. I am obliged to you for your extract from Mr. Bowman's letter. I feel myself sensibly pleased by the approbation of men of taste and learning; but that my vanity may not get too much to windward, my spirits are kept under by a total inability to renew my enterprises in the poetical way.

We love and respect Mrs. Cunningham, and sympathize with her under her many trials. May she arrive in safety! The severity of the season will, I suppose, retard her journey. We should rejoice more in your joy on the occasion, did not her visit to London look with an unfavourable aspect upon yours to Olney.

About three weeks since Mrs. Unwin sent you a couple of fowls, and about ten days since a sparerib from her own pig. We do not wish you to thank us for such matters, nor do we even imagine that any are due, every idea of that sort vanishes before the recollection of the many obligations under which you have laid us: but it is always satisfactory to us to know that they have reached you.

We are tolerably well, and love you both.

Yours, my dear friend, W. C.

When your last letter came, my eye was so much inflamed, that I could not look at your seal. It is better now, and I mean to consider it well when I see it next.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND, March 30, 1783.

THE sturgeon was incomparable, the best we ever had. We like both sturgeon and salmon, but choose the former as the

more durable commodity of the two, thanking you at the same time for your bounty.

To dispatch your questions first, which are of more importance than any subject that is likely to occur at present, will be both the civilest and the wisest course. Walnut shells, skilfully perforated, and bound over the eyes, are esteemed a good remedy for squinting; the pupil naturally seeking its light at the aperture, becomes at length habituated to a just position. But to alleviate your anxiety upon this subject, I have heard good judges of beauty declare that they thought a slight distortion of the eye in a pretty face rather advantageous.

The figure, however, cannot be good if the legs do not stand perpendicular to the person; knock-knees, therefore, must be corrected if they can. It is, I suppose, a case of weakness. I should therefore recommend the cold bath as a strengthener, and riding on horseback, as soon as the boy is capable of it, as a means of forcing their knees into their proper line. Their pressure against the saddle will naturally push them outwards, and accordingly you may frequently observe the legs of persons habituated from their infancy to this sort of exercise, curved almost into an arch: witness half the jockeys and postilions in the kingdom. The more the little man is made to turn the point of his toe inward when he is riding, I suppose the better.

You ask me how I like the peace. When a country is exhausted, peace is always preferable to war, and so far I like it, but no farther. Bad, however, as it is, it might be attended with some benefits, which the jarring interests of irreconcileable parties will not suffer us to reap at present. The papers inform us that Lord Bute is at the bottom of all this mischief,—no matter:—if the country is to be visited for its iniquities, there would be discord and anarchy, though Lord Bute were mouldering in the tomb of his ancestors. The Chancellor, too, is blamed, and perhaps with reason: the nation stands much in need of a political reform, to which he is an enemy, and consequently to all who advise one. A man of his abilities must have great influence, must either do much good or much evil; though wise, he is not infallible, and the errors of wise men are the most pernicious of all. I have found the etching you recommended, and admire it as the express image of a face with

which I was once familiar, but his great hat and his long band give him the air of an awkward country parson.

One of my hares is dead—behold his Epitaph[1].

We shall be happy to see you, and Mrs. U. with you, or any part of your family. I hope to be able to find a melon or two. Yours ever, with our united love, W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, April 5, 1783.

WHEN one has a letter to write, there is nothing more useful than to make a beginning. In the first place, because unless it be begun, there is no good reason to hope it will ever be ended; and secondly, because the beginning is half the business; it being much more difficult to put the pen in motion at first, than to continue the progress of it, when once moved.

Mrs. Cunningham's illness, likely to prove mortal, and seizing her at such a time, has excited much compassion in my breast, and in Mrs. Unwin's, both for her and her daughter. To have parted with a child she loves so much, intending soon to follow her; to find herself arrested before she could set out, and at so great a distance from her most valued relations, her daughter's life too threatened by a disorder not often curable, are circumstances truly affecting. She has indeed much natural fortitude, and to make her condition still more tolerable, a good Christian hope for her support. But so it is, that the distresses of those who least need our pity excite it most; the amiableness of the character engages our sympathy, and we mourn for persons for whom perhaps we might more reasonably rejoice. There is still however a possibility that she may recover; an event we *must* wish for, though for her to depart would be far better. Thus we would always withhold from the skies those who alone can reach them; at least till we are ready to bear them company.

Last week I had a letter from William Hadland, in very tragical terms soliciting the favour of an old coat, or money to purchase one. I have returned no answer, nor do I at present intend any; partly for the reasons that influenced you to refuse it, and partly because I have heard a very different account of the offence for which he was degraded, from that which his friend East related. I am informed that after the mutiny of

[1] *Printed* among the Poems.

wondrous works? Then shall he say unto them, Depart from me, for I never knew you." But perhaps he might be enlightened in his last moments, and saved in the very article of dissolution. It is much to be wished, and indeed hoped, that he was. Such a man reprobated in the great day, would be the most melancholy spectacle of all that shall stand at the left hand hereafter, But I do not think that *many*, or indeed *any* will be found there, who in their lives were sober, virtuous, and sincere, truly pious in the use of their little light, and though ignorant of God in comparison with some others, yet sufficiently informed to know that He is to be feared, loved, and trusted. An operation is often performed within the curtains of a dying bed, in behalf of such men, that the nurse and the doctor (I mean the doctor and the nurse) have no suspicion of. The soul makes but one step out of darkness into light, and makes that step without a witness. My brother's case has made me very charitable in my opinion about the future state of such men.

We wait with anxiety to be informed what news you receive from Scotland. Present our love, if you please, to Miss Cunningham. I saw in the Gentleman's Magazine for last month, an account of a physician who has discovered a new method of treating consumptive cases, which has succeeded wonderfully in the trial. He finds the seat of the distemper in the stomach, and cures it principally by emetics. The old method of encountering the disorder has proved so unequal to the task, that I should be much inclined to any new practice that came well recommended. He is spoken of as a sensible and judicious man, but his name I have forgot.

Yours, my dear friend. WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, May 5, 1783.

YOUR letter to Mr. Scott being sent unsealed demands my thanks, as it did my perusal. You may suppose I did not hear Mr. Mayor, but I heard *of him*. Mr. Scott and Mr. Chator liked him, the latter especially, who spoke of him at our house in terms of the highest commendation. I found however from the report of others that his sermon would have disgusted me. He not only dwelt upon circumstantials, which is certainly (to

use a simile from Horace) as unprofitable an employment as to pluck the hairs out of a horse's tail one by one, but expressed himself with a coarseness quite unworthy of the pulpit. Sin, he said, turns a man upside down, and grace turns a man inside out, then comes sin again, and by a dexterous jerk sets him topsy-turvy. I have formerly attended the Robin Hood Society, but those orators in leathern aprons and woollen night-caps never stooped so low for their rhetorical flowers. How different is that plainness of speech which a spiritual theme requires, from that vulgar dialect which this gentleman has mistaken for it! Affectation of every sort is odious, especially in a minister, and more especially an affectation that betrays him into expressions fit only for the mouths of the illiterate. Truth indeed needs no ornament, neither does a beautiful person; but to clothe it therefore in rags when a decent habit was at hand, would be esteemed preposterous and absurd. The best proportioned figure may be made offensive by beggary and filth; and even truths which came down from Heaven, though they cannot forego their nature, may be disguised and disgraced by unsuitable language. It is strange that a pupil of yours should blunder thus. You may be consoled however, by reflecting, that he could not have erred so grossly, if he had not totally and wilfully departed both from your instruction and example. Were I to describe your style in two words, I should call it plain and neat, *simplicem munditiis*, and I do not know how I could give it juster praise, or pay it a greater compliment. Certainly therefore the disciple in this particular at least, is not like his master. He that can speak to be understood by a congregation of rustics, and yet in terms that would not offend academical ears, has found the happy medium. This is certainly practicable to men of taste and judgement, and the practice of a few proves it. *Hactenus de concionando.*

Fanny Kitchener brought Mrs. Unwin a letter yesterday of her own writing. It was sensible and well expressed,—much better than the preachment above mentioned. The purport of it was to confess the impropriety of her past conduct, and to entreat Mrs Unwin's forgiveness of the offence it must have given her. She spoke with many tears and much feeling, and in the judgement of common charity is truly penitent. Mr. Scott, who I believe is a surgeon that makes more use of the knife than the poultice, had told her there was but little en-

courngement for sinners of her complexion; but your letter to her healed all and brought her peace. She is very painfully distempered in body, and in hopes of being admitted into the Northampton hospital.

We are truly glad to hear that Miss Cunningham is better, and heartily wish you more promising accounts from Scotland. *Debemur morti nos nostraque.* We all acknowledge the debt, but are seldom pleased when those we love are required to pay it. The demand will find you prepared for it, but not me, though I have had long notice. I watched and longed for it some years, but within the last ten have learnt to fear it.

Our love attends Mrs. Newton. You have both an undiminished share in it. Yours, my dear friend, W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND, May 12, 1783.

A LETTER written from such a place as this is a creation; and creation is a work for which mere mortal man is very indifferently qualified. *Ex nihilo nihil fit,* is a maxim that applies itself in every case where Deity is not concerned. With this view of the matter, I should charge myself with extreme folly for pretending to work without materials, did I not know, that although nothing should be the result, even That nothing will be welcome. If I can tell you no news, I can tell you at least that I esteem you highly; that my friendship with you and yours is the only balm of my life; a comfort, sufficient to reconcile me to an existence destitute of every other. This is not the language of to-day, only the effect of a transient cloud suddenly brought over me, and suddenly to be removed, but punctually expressive of my habitual frame of mind, such as it has been these ten years.

They that have found a God, and are permitted to worship him, have found a treasure, of which, highly as they may prize it, they have but very scanty and limited conceptions. Take my word for it,—the word of a man singularly well qualified to give his evidence in this matter, who having enjoyed the privilege some years, has been deprived of it more, and has no hope that he shall live to recover it. These are my Sunday morning speculations;—the sound of the bells suggested them, or rather, gave them such an emphasis that they forced their way into

my pen, in spite of me; for though I do not often commit them to paper, they are never absent from my mind.

In the Review of last month, I met with an account of a sermon preached by Mr. Paley, at the consecration of his friend, Bishop Law. The critic admires and extols the preacher, and devoutly prays the Lord of the harvest to send forth more such labourers into his vineyard. I rather differ from him in opinion, not being able to conjecture in what respect the vineyard will be benefited by such a measure. He is certainly ingenious, and has stretched his ingenuity to the uttermost in order to exhibit the church established, consisting of bishops, priests, and deacons, in the most favourable point of view: but an unspiritual, lazy, luxurious hierarchy is too sable a subject for such washing to whiten it. I lay it down for a rule, that when much ingenuity is necessary to gain an argument credit, that argument is unsound at bottom. So is his, and so are all the pretty devices by which he seeks to enforce it. He says first, "that the appointment of various orders in the church is attended with this good consequence, that each class of people is supplied with a clergy of their own level and description, with whom they may live and associate on terms of equality." But in order to effect this good purpose, there ought to be at least three parsons in every parish, one for the gentry, one for the traders and mechanics, and one for the lowest of the vulgar. Neither is it easy to find many parishes, where the laity at large have any society with their minister at all. This therefore is fanciful, and a mere invention. In the next place he says it gives a dignity to the ministry itself, and the clergy share in the respect paid to their superiors. Much good may such participation do them! They themselves know how little it amounts to. The dignity a parson derives from the lawn sleeves and square cap of his diocesan will never endanger his humility.

Pope says truly——

> Worth makes the man, and want of it the fellow;
> The rest is all but leather or prunello.

Again—"Rich and splendid situations in the church have been justly regarded as prizes, held out to invite persons of good hopes, and ingenuous attainments." Agreed. But the prize held out in the Scripture is of a very different kind; and our *ecclesiastical baits* are too often snapped by the worth-

less, and persons of no attainments at all. They are indeed incentives to avarice and ambition, but not to those acquirements by which only the ministerial function can be adorned,—zeal for the salvation of men, humility, and self-denial.

Mr. Paley and I therefore cannot agree.

Yours, my dear friend, W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

May 26, 1783.

I FEEL for my uncle, and do not wonder that his loss afflicts him. A connexion that has subsisted so many years could not be rent asunder without great pain to the survivor. I hope however and doubt not but when he has had a little more time for recollection, he will find that consolation in his own family, which it is not the lot of every father to be blessed with. It seldom happens that married persons live together so long, or so happily; but this, which one feels oneself ready to suggest as matter of alleviation, is the very circumstance that aggravates his distress; therefore he misses her the more, and feels that he can but ill spare her. It is however a necessary tax, which all who live long must pay for their longevity, to lose many whom they would be glad to detain, (perhaps those in whom all their happiness is centered), and to see them step into their grave before them. In one respect at least this is a merciful appointment: when life has lost that to which it owed its principal relish, we may ourselves the more cheerfully resign it. I beg you would present him with my most affectionate remembrance, and tell him, if you think fit, how much I wish that the evening of his long day may be serene and happy.

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, May 31, 1783.

YOU have had but a disagreeable part to perform towards your two visitors, which, though disagreeable, you have performed well. I understand perfectly your reasons for not offering your pulpit to the first; but though I have no doubt of your having withheld it for reasons not less cogent, from the last, I am not equally aware of them. Whether your objections were suggested by his general course of life, or *by any particular* instance of misconduct, my memory, which

is but an indifferent one, does not furnish me with the means of knowing; neither is there any necessity that you should inform me, unless it should happen that you have nothing more important to write about, for I feel myself much disposed to an implicit acquiescence in the propriety of all you do. I recollect but very imperfectly, something that passed at Doctors' Commons, where he shone indeed as he does every where, but so much in the wrong place, that serious and thinking people were rather disgusted than pleased. If, however, his ministry prospers at home, it is well; and he may find in that circumstance a consolation of which I fear our friend at Epsom cannot so readily avail himself.

We rather rejoice than mourn with you on the occasion of Mrs. Cunningham's death. In the case of believers, death has lost his sting, not only with respect to those he takes away, but with respect to survivors also. Nature indeed will always suggest some causes of sorrow, when an amiable and Christian friend departs; but the Scripture, so many more, and so much more important reasons to rejoice, that on such occasions, perhaps more remarkably than on any other, sorrow is turned into joy. The law of our land is affronted if we say the king dies, and insists on it that he only *demises*. This, which is a fiction, where a monarch only is in question, in the case of a Christian is reality and truth. He only lays aside a body, which it is his privilege to be encumbered with no longer; and instead of dying, in that moment he begins to live. But this the world does not understand, therefore the kings of it must go on *demising* to the end of the chapter, till futurity shall prove that most of them are dead indeed.

Our illustrious visitors from the continent, whatever opinion they may conceive of our *politesse*, in which perhaps they may condescend to think us inferior only to themselves, are likely to entertain but a mean one of our devotion. They will observe, at least, that the sabbath is almost as obsolete in England as in France. I feel something like indignation kindle within me, when the papers tell me that our dukes and our judges, the legislators who not long since enacted a penalty upon the profanation of that day, themselves profane it, and in a manner the most notorious. The Duchess of Devonshire has amused the world and herself almost as long as the most celebrated lady can expect *to do it*. They that were infants when she first

started in the race of pleasure, are now beginning to engage attention, and will soon elbow that Queen of the revels out of her delightful office. Instead of a girdle there will be a rent, and instead of beauty, baldness. I once knew her Grace of Devonshire's mother well; she is a sensible and discreet woman, so that the daughter has the more to fear, and the less to plead in her excuse. Yet a little while, and she and all such will know that their life was madness.—*Quicquid in buccam venerit, loquor.*

We are well, and shall rejoice to see you at any time. Be assured of our love, and believe me, my dear friend,

Ever yours, WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM BULL.

MY DEAR FRIEND, June 3, 1783.

My greenhouse, fronted with myrtles, and where I hear nothing but the pattering of a fine shower and the sound of distant thunder, wants only the fumes of your pipe to make it perfectly delightful. Tobacco was not known in the golden age. So much the worse for the golden age. This age of iron, or lead, would be insupportable without it; and therefore we may reasonably suppose that the happiness of those better days would have been much improved by the use of it. We hope that you and your son are perfectly recovered. The season has been most unfavourable to animal life; and I, who am merely animal, have suffered much by it.

Though I should be glad to write, I write little or nothing. The time for such fruit is not yet come; but I expect it, and I wish for it. I want amusement; and, deprived of that, have none to supply the place of it. I send you, however, according to my promise to send you every thing, two stanzas composed at the request of Lady Austen. She wanted words to a tune she much admired, and I gave her these on Peace.

Yours, W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, June 8, 1783.

Our severest winter, commonly called the spring, is now over, and I find myself seated in my favourite recess, the greenhouse. In such a situation, so silent, so shady, where no human foot is heard, and where only my myrtles presume to peep in at the window, you may suppose I have no interruption to complain

of, and that my thoughts are perfectly at my command. But the beauties of the spot are themselves an interruption; my attention is called upon by those very myrtles, by a double row of grass pinks just beginning to blossom, and by a bed of beans already in bloom; and you are to consider it, if you please, as no small proof of my regard, that though you have so many powerful rivals, I disengage myself from them all, and devote this hour entirely to you.

You are not acquainted with the Rev. Mr. Bull, of Newport; perhaps it is as well for you that you are not. You would regret still more than you do, that there are so many miles interposed between us. He spends part of the day with us to-morrow. A dissenter, but a liberal one; a man of letters and of genius; master of a fine imagination, or rather not master of it,—an imagination which, when he finds himself in the company he loves, and can confide in, runs away with him into such fields of speculation, as amuse and enliven every other imagination that has the happiness to be of the party. At other times he has a tender and delicate sort of melancholy in his disposition, not less agreeable in its way. No men are better qualified for companions in such a world as this, than men of such a temperament. Every scene of life has two sides, a dark and a bright one, and the mind that has an equal mixture of melancholy and vivacity is best of all qualified for the contemplation of either; it can be lively without levity, and pensive without dejection. Such a man is Mr. Bull. But—he smokes tobacco. Nothing is perfect,—

Nihil est ab omni
Parte beatum.

I find that your friend Mr. Fytche has lost his cause; and more mortifying still, has lost it by a single voice. Had I been a peer, he should have been secure of mine; for I am persuaded that if conditional presentations were in fashion, and if every minister held his benefice, as the judges their office, upon the terms of *quamdiu bene se gesserit*, it would be better for the cause of religion, and more for the honour of the Establishment. There ought to be discipline somewhere; and if the Bishops will not exercise it, I do not see why lay patrons should have their hands tied. If I remember your state of the case, (and I never heard it stated but by you,) my reflections upon it are *pertinent. It is, however*, long since we talked about it,

and I may possibly misconceive it at present: if so, they go for nothing. I understand that he presented upon condition, that if the parson proved immoral or negligent, he should have liberty to call upon him either for his resignation or the penalty. If I am wrong, correct me.

On the other side I send you a something, a song if you please, composed last Thursday—the incident happened the day before[1]. Yours, W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, June 13, 1783.

I THANK you for your Dutch communications. The suffrage of such respectable men must have given you much pleasure, a pleasure only to be exceeded by the consciousness you had before of having published truth, and of having served a good master by doing so. Mr. Madan, too, I remember had the testimony of a Dutch divine in favour of his Thelyphthora. The only inference is, that Dutch divines are not all alike; and that in Holland, as well as elsewhere, error and heresy can find advocates among those, who by their very function are called upon to root them out.

I have always regretted that your ecclesiastical history went no further; I never saw a work that I thought more likely to serve the cause of truth, nor history applied to so good a purpose. The facts incontestable, the grand observations upon them all irrefragable, and the style, in my judgement, incomparably better than that of Robertson or Gibbon. I would give you my reasons for thinking so, if I had not a very urgent one for declining it: you have no ear for such music, whoever be the performer. What you added, but never printed, is quite equal to what has appeared, which I think might have encouraged you to proceed, though you missed that freedom in writing which you found before. While you were at Olney this was at least possible: in a state of retirement you had leisure, without which I suppose Paul himself could not have written his Epistles. But those days are fled, and every hope of a continuation is fled with them.

The day of Judgement is spoken of not only as a surprise, but a snare—a snare upon all the inhabitants of the earth. A difference indeed will obtain in favour of the godly, which is,

[1] Here followed his song of the Rose.

that though a snare, a sudden, in some sense an unexpected, and in every sense an aweful event, yet it will find *them* prepared to meet it. But the day being thus characterised, a wide field is consequently open to conjecture; some will look for it at one period, and some at another; we shall most of us prove at last to have been mistaken, and if any should prove to have guessed aright, they will reap no advantage, the felicity of their conjecture being incapable of proof till the day itself shall prove it. My own sentiments upon the subject appear to me perfectly scriptural, though I have no doubt that they differ totally from those of all who have ever thought about it; being however so singular, and of no importance to the happiness of mankind, and being moreover difficult to swallow, just in proportion as they are peculiar, I keep them to myself.

I am, and always have been, a great observer of natural appearances, but I think not a superstitious one. The fallibility of those speculations which lead men of fanciful minds to interpret Scripture by the contingencies of the day, is evident from this consideration, that what the God of the Scriptures has seen fit to conceal, he will not as the God of Nature publish. He is one and the same in both capacities, and consistent with himself; and his purpose, if he designs a secret, impenetrable, in whatever way we attempt to open it. It is impossible however for an observer of natural phenomena not to be struck with the singularity of the present season. The fogs I mentioned in my last still continue, though till yesterday the earth was as dry as intense heat could make it. The sun continues to rise and set without his rays, and hardly shines at noon, even in a cloudless sky. At eleven last night the moon was a dull red; she was nearly at her highest elevation, and had the colour of heated brick. She would naturally, I know, have such an appearance looking through a misty atmosphere; but that such an atmosphere should obtain for so long a time, and in a country where it has not happened in my remembrance even in the winter, is rather remarkable. We have had more thunder storms than have consisted well with the peace of the fearful maidens in Olney, though not so many as have happened in places at no great distance, nor so violent. Yesterday morning however at seven o'clock, two fire-balls burst either in the steeple or close to it. William Andrews saw them meet at that point, and immediately after saw such a smoke issue from

the apertures in the steeple as soon rendered it invisible. I believe no very material damage happened, though when Joe Green went afterwards to wind the clock, flakes of stone and lumps of mortar fell about his ears in such abundance, that he desisted, and fled terrified. The noise of the explosion surpassed all the noises I ever heard;—you would have thought that a thousand sledge-hammers were battering great stones to powder, all in the same instant. The weather is still as hot, and the air as full of vapour, as if there had been neither rain nor thunder all the summer.

There was once a periodical paper published, called Mist's Journal: a name pretty well adapted to the sheet before you. Misty however as I am, I do not mean to be mystical, but to be understood, like an almanack-maker, according to the letter. As a poet, nevertheless, I claim, if any wonderful event should follow, a right to apply all and every such post-prognostic, to the purposes of the tragic muse.

Dead ducks cannot travel this weather; they say it is too hot for them, and they shall stink.

Yours and yours, WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, June 17, 1783.

YOUR letter reached Mr. Scott while Mr. Mayor was with him; whether it wrought any change in *his* opinion of that gentleman, as a preacher, I know not; but for my own part I give you full credit for the soundness and rectitude of *yours*, not only because I think highly of your judgement, but because it coincides exactly with that of every judicious person whom I have heard mention him. I believe no man was ever scolded out of his sins. The heart, corrupt as it is, and because it is so, grows angry if it be not treated with some management and good manners, and scolds again. A surly mastiff will bear perhaps to be stroked, though he will growl even under that operation,—but if you touch him roughly, he will bite. There is no grace that the spirit of self can counterfeit with more success than a religious zeal. A man thinks he is fighting for Christ, and he is fighting for his own notions. He thinks that he is skilfully searching the hearts of others, when he is only gratifying the malignity of his own, and charitably supposes his hearers destitute of all grace, that he may shine the

more in his own eyes by comparison. When he has performed this notable task, he wonders that they are not converted: "he has given it them soundly, and if they do not tremble, and confess that God is in him of a truth, he gives them up as reprobate, incorrigible, and lost for ever." But a man that loves me, if he sees me in an error, will pity me, and endeavour calmly to convince me of it, and persuade me to forsake it. If he has great and good news to tell me, he will not do it angrily, and in much heat and discomposure of spirit. It is not therefore easy to conceive on what ground a minister can justify conduct which only proves that he does not understand his errand. The absurdity of it would certainly strike him, if he were not himself deluded.

Mr. Raban was ordained a minister to an Independent congregation at Yardley, on Thursday last. Three ministers attended, and three sermons were preached upon the occasion. Mr. Bull was one of them. The church consists at present of only twenty-five members. He is to have no stipend, and was unanimously chosen. There was a large congregation, and vast numbers went from Olney. I have been informed that Mr. Bull's examination of him was very close, and his own account of himself very affecting. All his own family were present, and all dissolved in tears.

Mr. Hillyard, Mr. Whitford's successor, who came hither from Kimbolton, is very acceptable and much followed. Though a man of no education, he has taken great pains to inform his mind. He often pronounces a word wrong, but always uses it with propriety. He is never out of temper in the pulpit, but his sermons are experimental, searching, and evangelical. He bids fair consequently for considerable success. A people will always love a minister, if a minister seems to love his people. The old maxim, *Simile agit in simile*, is in no case more exactly verified: therefore you were beloved at Olney, and if you preached to the Chickesaws, and Chachtaws, would be equally beloved by them.

The summer is passing away, and hitherto has hardly been either seen or felt. Perpetual clouds intercept the influences of the sun, and for the most part there is an autumnal coldness in the weather, though we are almost upon the eve of the longest day. We are glad to find that you still entertain the design of coming, and hope that you will bring sunshine with you.

We are well and always mindful of you; be mindful of us, and assured that we love you. Mrs. Unwin is not the less thankful for the cocoa nuts because they were so naught they could not be eaten. If they were bought, the seller was to blame; for which reason I thought it necessary to tell you what they were.

Yours, my dear friend, and Mrs. Newton's
Affectionate WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM BULL.

MY DEAR FRIEND, June 20, 1783.

THIS comes accompanied by a letter Mrs. Unwin received from Mrs. Powley; she thought it would please you. I send you the petite piece I promised, not quite so worthy of your notice; but it is yours by engagement, otherwise, I believe you would never have seen it[1].

The ladies are in the greenhouse, and tea waits.

Yours more than I have time to tell you,
WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM BULL.

MY DEAR FRIEND, June 27, 1783.

A FINE morning, though a shady one, has induced me to spend that time in walking which I had devoted to the quill; consequently I send you no letter for Mr. Newton, but am obliged to postpone my answer to his last till the usual opportunity shall arrive. I cannot resist fine weather; and the omission is of no great consequence, both because I have nothing new to communicate, and because I have a frank which will convey that nothing to him gratis. I wish you and yours a pleasant excursion, as pleasant as the season and the scene to which you are going can possibly make it. I shall rejoice to hear from you, and am sufficiently flattered by the recollection, that just after hearing your protest against all letter-writing, I heard you almost promise to write a letter to me. The journeys of a man like you must be all sentimental journeys, and better worth the recital than Sterne's would have been, had he travelled to this moment. Adieu, my friend!

Yours, WM. COWPER.

Mrs. Unwin's love. Send the Review.

[1] "*The rose* had been wash'd (just wash'd in a show'r)."

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, June 29, 1783.

THE translation of your letters into *Dutch* was news that pleased me *much*. I intended plain prose, but a rhyme obtruded itself, and I became poetical when I least expected it. The Bœotian atmosphere I have breathed these six days past, makes such a sally of genius the more surprising,—so long, in a country not subject to fogs, we have been covered with one of the thickest I remember. We never see the sun but shorn of his beams. The trees are scarce discernible at a mile's distance. He sets with the face of a red-hot salamander, and rises, (as I learn from report,) with the same complexion. Such a phenomenon at the end of June has occasioned much speculation among the *connoscenti* at this place. Some fear to go to bed, expecting an earthquake! some declare that he neither rises nor sets where he did, and assert with great confidence that the day of Judgement is at hand. This is probable, and I believe it myself, but for other reasons. In the meantime I cannot discover in them, however alarmed, the symptoms even of a temporary reformation. This very Sunday morning the pitchers of all have been carried into Silver End as usual, the inhabitants perhaps judging that they have more than ordinary need of that cordial at such a juncture. It is however, seriously, a remarkable appearance, and the only one of the kind that at this season of the year has fallen under my notice. Signs in the heavens are predicted characters of the last times; and in the course of the last fifteen years I have been a witness of many. The present obfuscation, (if I may call it so,) of all nature may be ranked perhaps among the most remarkable; but possibly it may not be universal; in London at least, where a dingy atmosphere is frequent, it may be less observable.

Pardon a digression which I slipped into at unawares, a transition from Holland to a fog was not unnatural. When you wrote those letters you did not dream that you were designed for an apostle to the Dutch. Yet so it proves, and such among many others are the advantages we derive from the art of printing; an art in which indisputably man was instructed by the same great teacher who taught him to embroider for the service of the sanctuary, and to beat out the cummin,—and which amounts almost to as great a blessing as the gift of

tongues, diffusing an author's sentiments upon the noblest subjects through a people.

Mrs. Unwin desires me to send her love, and to thank Mrs. Newton for all she has done for her. Every thing has arrived safe, and been managed exactly to her mind. In the course of next month she hopes to treat you with a cupple of dux.

Yours, my dear friend, W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, July 27, 1783.

You cannot have more pleasure in receiving a letter from me, than I should find in writing it, were it not almost impossible in such a place to find a subject.

I live in a world abounding with incidents, upon which many grave, and perhaps some profitable observations might be made; but those incidents never reaching my unfortunate ears, both the entertaining narrative and the reflection it might suggest are to me annihilated and lost. I look back to the past week, and say, what did it produce? I ask the same question of the week preceding, and duly receive the same answer from both,—nothing!—A situation like this, in which I am as unknown to the world, as I am ignorant of all that passes in it, in which I have nothing to do but to think, would exactly suit me, were my subjects of meditation as agreeable as my leisure is uninterrupted. My passion for retirement is not at all abated, after so many years spent in the most sequestered state, but rather increased;—a circumstance I should esteem wonderful to a degree not to be accounted for, considering the condition of my mind, did I not know, that we think as we are made to think, and of course approve and prefer, as Providence, who appoints the bounds of our habitation, chooses for us. Thus am I both free and a prisoner at the same time. The world is before me; I am not shut up in the Bastille; there are no moats about my castle, no locks upon my gates, of which I have not the key;—but an invisible, uncontrollable agency, a local attachment, an inclination more forcible than I ever felt, even to the place of my birth, serves me for prison-walls, and for bounds which I cannot pass. In former years I have known sorrow, and before I had ever tasted of spiritual trouble. The effect was an abhorrence of the scene in which I had suffered so much, and a weariness to those objects which I had so long looked at with an eye of de-

spondency and dejection. But it is otherwise with me now. The same cause subsisting, and in a much more powerful degree, fails to produce its natural effect. The very stones in the garden-walls are my intimate acquaintance. I should miss almost the minutest object, and be disagreeably affected by its removal, and am persuaded that were it possible I could leave this incommodious nook for a twelvemonth, I should return to it again with rapture, and be transported with the sight of objects which to all the world beside would be at least indifferent; some of them perhaps, such as the ragged thatch and the tottering walls of the neighbouring cottages, disgusting. But so it is, and it is so, because here is to be my abode, and because such is the appointment of *Him* that placed me in it.—

Iste terrarum mihi præter omnes
Angulus ridet.

It is the place of all the world I love the most, not for any happiness it affords me, but because here I can be miserable with most convenience to myself and with the least disturbance to others.

You wonder, and (I dare say) unfeignedly, because you do not think yourself entitled to such praise, that I prefer your style, as an historian, to that of the two most renowned writers of history the present day has seen. That you may not suspect me of having said more than my real opinion will warrant, I will tell you why. In your style I see no affectation. In every line of theirs I see nothing else. They disgust me always, Robertson with his pomp and his strut, and Gibbon with his finical and French manners. You are as correct as they. You express yourself with as much precision. Your words are ranged with as much propriety, but you do not set your periods to a tune. They discover a perpetual desire to exhibit themselves to advantage, whereas your subject engrosses you. They sing, and you say; which, as history is a thing to be said, and not sung, is in my judgement, very much to your advantage. A writer that despises their tricks, and is yet neither inelegant nor inharmonious, proves himself, by that single circumstance, a man of superior judgement and ability to them both. You have my reasons. I honour a manly character, in which good sense, and a desire of doing good, are the predominant features;—but affectation is an emetic.

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM BULL.

MY DEAR BULL, Aug. 3, 1783.

I BEGAN to despair of you as a correspondent, yet not to blame you for being silent. I am acquainted with Rottingdean and all its charms, the downs, the cliff, and the agreeable opportunities of sauntering that the seaside affords. I knew, besides, that your preachings would be frequent, and allowed an especial force above all to the consideration of your natural indolence; for though diligent and active in your business, you know in your heart that you love your ease, as all parsons do: these weighty causes all concurring to justify your silence, I should have been very unreasonable had I condemned it.

I laughed, as you did, at the alarm taken by your reverend brother of the Establishment, and at his choice of a text by way of antidote to the noxious tendency of your discourses. The text, with a little transposition and variation of the words, would perhaps have come nearer to the truth, and have suited the occasion better.

Instead of exhorting his hearers to hold fast the form of sound words, he should have said the sound of a form, which I take to be a just description of the sermons he makes himself, that have nothing but a sound and a form to recommend them. I rejoice that the bathing has been of use to you; the more you wash the filthier may you be, that your days may be prolonged, and your health more established. Scratching is good exercise, promotes the circulation, elicits the humours, and if you will take a certain monarch's word, of itching memory, is too great a pleasure for a subject.

I was always an admirer of thunder-storms, even before I knew whose voice I heard in them; but especially an admirer of thunder rolling over the great waters. There is something singularly majestic in the sound of it at sea, where the eye and the ear have uninterrupted opportunity of observation, and the concavity above being made spacious reflects it with more advantage. I have consequently envied you your situation, and the enjoyment of those refreshing breezes that belong to it. We have indeed been regaled with some of these bursts of ethereal music.—The peals have been as loud, by the report of a gentleman who lived many years in the West Indies, as were ever heard in those islands, and the flashes as splendid.

But when the thunder preaches, an horizon bounded by the ocean is the only sounding-board.

I have but little leisure, strange as it may seem; that little I devoted for a month after your departure to the translation of Madame Guyon. I have made fair copies of all the pieces I have produced upon this last occasion, and will put them into your hands when we meet. They are yours, to serve you as you please; you may take and leave as you like, for my purpose is already served. They have amused me, and I have no further demands upon them. The lines upon Friendship however, which were not sufficiently of a piece with the others, will not now be wanted. I have some other little things which I will communicate when time shall serve, but I cannot now transcribe them.

Mrs. Unwin is well, and begs to be affectionately remembered to you and yours. I wish you many smugglers to shine in your crown of rejoicing on a certain day that approaches, and would take the trade myself if I could suppose it might be the means of introducing me to a place amongst them; but I must neither wear a crown, nor help to adorn one.

Yours, my dear friend, WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM BULL.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I RECEIVED your letter on the first. I answer on the third. You leave Lymington on the sixth, and will consequently be at home when you receive my answer. I shall not therefore be very prolix, writing as I do, under the expectation and hope that we shall see you soon.

We are both indebted and obliged to you for your journal of occurrences, and are glad that there is not one amongst them for which *you* have reason to be sorry. Your seaside situation, your beautiful prospects, your fine rides, and the sight of the palaces which you have seen, we have not envied you; but are glad that you have enjoyed them. Why should we envy any man? Is not our greenhouse a cabinet of perfumes? It is at this moment fronted with carnations and balsams, with mignionette and roses, with jessamine and woodbine, and wants nothing but your pipe to make it truly Arabian; — a wilderness of sweets! The Sofa is ended, but not finished; a paradox, which your natural acumen, sharpened by habits of logical attention, will enable you to reconcile in a

moment. Do not imagine, however, that I lounge over it; —on the contrary I find it severe exercise, to mould and fashion it to my mind!

Let us see you as soon as possible; present our affectionate respects to your family, and tell the Welshman and his chum that if they do not behave themselves well, I will lash them soundly; they will not be the first academics to whom I have shown no mercy. Yours, with Mrs. Unwin's love,

W^M^. COWPER.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, August 4, 1783.

I FEEL myself sensibly obliged by the interest you take in the success of my productions. Your feelings upon the subject are such as I should have myself, had I an opportunity of calling Johnson aside to make the enquiry you purpose. But I am pretty well prepared for the worst, and so long as I have the opinion of a few capable judges in my favour, and am thereby convinced that I have neither disgraced myself nor my subject, shall not feel myself disposed to any extreme anxiety about the sale. To aim with success at the spiritual good of mankind, and to become popular by writing on scriptural subjects, were an unreasonable ambition, even for a poet to entertain, in days like these. Verse may have many charms, but has none powerful enough to conquer the aversion of a dissipated age to such instruction. Ask the question therefore boldly, and be not mortified even though he should shake his head, and drop his chin; for it is no more than we have a reason to expect. We will lay the fault upon the vice of the times, and we will acquit the poet.

I am glad you were pleased with my Latin ode, and indeed with my English dirge, as much as I was myself. The tune laid me under a disadvantage, obliging me to write in Alexandrines; which I suppose would suit no ear but a French one; neither did I intend any thing more than that the subject and the words should be sufficiently accommodated to the music. The ballad is a species of poetry, I believe, peculiar to this country, equally adapted to the drollest and the most tragical subjects. Simplicity and ease are its proper characteristics. Our forefathers excelled in it; but we moderns have lost the art. It is observed, that we have few good English odes.

But to make amends, we have many excellent ballads, not inferior perhaps in true poetical merit to some of the very best odes that the Greek or Latin languages have to boast of. It is a sort of composition I was ever fond of, and if graver matters had not called me another way, should have addicted myself to it more than to any other. I inherit a taste for it from my father, who succeeded well in it himself, and who lived at a time when the best pieces in that way were produced. What can be prettier than Gay's ballad, or rather Swift's, Arbuthnot's, Pope's, and Gay's, in the What do ye call it—"'Twas when the seas were roaring?" I have been well informed that they all contributed, and that the most celebrated association of clever fellows this country ever saw did not think it beneath them to unite their strength and abilities in the composition of a song. The success however answered to their wishes, and our puny days will never produce such another. The ballads that Bourne has translated, beautiful in themselves, are still more beautiful in his version of them, infinitely surpassing, in my judgement, all that Ovid or Tibullus have left behind them. They are quite as elegant, and far more touching and pathetic than the tenderest strokes of either.

So much for ballads, and ballad writers. "A worthy subject," you will say, "for a man whose head might be filled with better things;"—and *it is* filled with better things, but to so ill a purpose, that I thrust into it all manner of topics that may prove more amusing; as for instance, I have two goldfinches, which in the summer occupy the greenhouse. A few days since, being employed in cleaning out their cages, I placed that which I had in hand upon the table, while the other hung against the wall: the windows and the doors stood wide open. I went to fill the fountain at the pump, and on my return was not a little surprised to find a goldfinch sitting on the top of the cage I had been cleaning, and singing to and kissing the goldfinch within. I approached him, and he discovered no fear; still nearer, and he discovered none. I advanced my hand towards him, and he took no notice of it. I seized him, and supposed I had caught a new bird, but casting my eye upon the other cage perceived my mistake. Its inhabitant, during my absence, had contrived to find an opening, where the wire had been a little bent, and made no other use of the escape *it afforded him*, than to salute his friend, and

to converse with him more intimately than he had done before. I returned him to his proper mansion, but in vain. In less than a minute he had thrust his little person through the aperture again, and again perched upon his neighbour's cage, kissing him, as at the first, and singing, as if transported with the fortunate adventure. I could not but respect such friendship, as for the sake of its gratification had twice declined an opportunity to be free, and, consenting to their union, resolved that for the future one cage should hold them both. I am glad of such incidents; for at a pinch, and when I need entertainment, the versification of them serves to divert me.

I hope you will receive a very fine melon, which we send according to your last direction; it will leave this place on Wednesday.

I transcribe for you a piece of Madam Guyon, not as the best, but as being shorter than many, and as good as most of them. Yours ever, W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Sept. 7, 1783.

So long a silence needs an apology. I have been hindered by a three-weeks visit from our Hoxton friends, and by a cold, and feverish complaint, which are but just removed. A foggy summer is likely to be attended with a sickly autumn; such multitudes are indisposed by fevers in this country, that the farmers have with difficulty gathered in their harvest, the labourers having been almost every day carried out of the field incapable of work; and many die.

The French poetess is certainly chargeable with the fault you mention, though I thought it not very glaring in the piece I sent you. I have endeavoured indeed, in all the translations I have made, to cure her of that evil, either by the suppression of passages exceptionable upon that account, or by a more sober and respectful manner of expression. Still however she will be found to have conversed familiarly with God, but I hope not fulsomely, nor so as to give a reasonable disgust to a religious reader. That God should deal familiarly with man, or, which is the same thing, that he should permit man to deal familiarly with him, seems not very difficult to conceive, or presumptuous to suppose, when some things are taken into consideration. Woe to the sinner that shall dare to take a liberty

with Him that is not warranted by his word, or to which He himself has not encouraged him! Till the incarnation of the Godhead is verily believed, He is unapproachable by man upon any terms; and in that case to accost him as if we had a right of relationship, when in reality we have none, would be to affront Him to his face. But an Incarnate God is as much human as divine. When He assumed man's nature, he revealed himself as the friend of man, as the brother of every soul that loves him. He conversed freely with man while he was upon earth, and as freely with him after his resurrection. I doubt not therefore that it is possible to enjoy an access to Him even now unincumbered with ceremonious awe, easy, delightful, and without constraint. This however can only be the lot of those who make it the business of their lives to please him, and to cultivate communion with him. And then I presume there can be no danger of offence, because such a habit of the soul is of his own creation, and near as we come, we come no nearer to him than He is pleased to draw us. If we address him as children, it is because he tells us he is our father. If we unbosom ourselves to him as to a friend, it is because he calls us friends; and if we speak to him in the language of love, it is because he first used it, thereby teaching us that it is the language he delights to hear from his people. But I confess that through the weakness, the folly, and corruption of human nature, this privilege, like all other Christian privileges, is liable to abuse. There is a mixture of evil in every thing we do; indulgence encourages us to encroach, and while we exercise the rights of children, we become childish. Here I think is the point in which my authoress failed; and here it is that I have particularly guarded my translation, not afraid of representing her as dealing with God familiarly, but foolishly, irreverently, and without due attention to his majesty, of which she is sometimes guilty. A wonderful fault for such a woman to fall into, who spent her life in the contemplation of his glory, who seems to have been always impressed with a sense of it, and sometimes quite absorbed in the views she had of it.

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Sept. 8, 1783.

MRS. UNWIN *would have* answered your kind note from Bed-

ford, had not a pain in her side prevented her. It still continues, but is less violent than it was. I, who am her secretary upon such occasions, should certainly have answered it for her, but was hindered by illness, having been myself seized with a fever immediately after your departure. The account of your recovery gave us great pleasure, and I am persuaded that you will feel yourself repaid by the information that I give you of mine. The reveries your head was filled with, while your disorder was most prevalent, though they were but reveries, and the offspring of a heated imagination, afforded you yet a comfortable evidence of the predominant bias of your heart and mind to the best subjects. I had none such; it would have been wonderful if I had: indeed I was in no degree delirious, nor has any thing less than a fever really dangerous ever made me so. In this respect, if in no other, I may be said to have a strong head; and perhaps for the same reason that wine would never make me drunk, an ordinary degree of fever has no effect upon my understanding.

The epidemic begins to be more mortal as the autumn comes on. Two men of drunken memory, Bob Freeman and Bob Kitchener, have died of it since you went. In Bedfordshire it is reported, how truly however I cannot say, to be nearly as fatal as the plague. It is well for those about me, that I am neither very subject to fevers, nor apt to lose my senses when I have one. My ravings would be those of a man more conversant with things beneath than with things above, and if they bore any resemblance to my habitual musings, would serve only to shock bystanders. I heard lately of a clerk in a public office, whose chief employment it was for many years to administer oaths, who being light-headed in a fever, of which he died, spent the last week of his life in crying day and night—"So help you God—kiss the book—give me a shilling." What a wretch in comparison with you, and how happy in comparison with me!

I have indeed been lately more dejected and more distressed than usual; more harassed by dreams in the night, and more deeply poisoned by them in the following day. I know not what is portended by an alteration for the worse after eleven years of misery, but firmly believe that it is not designed as the introduction of a change for the better. You know not *what I suffered* while you were here, nor was there any need

you should. Your friendship for me would have made you in some degree a partaker of my woes, and your share in them would have been increased by your inability to help me. Perhaps indeed they took a keener edge from the consideration of your presence; the friend of my heart, the person with whom I had formerly taken sweet counsel, no longer useful to me as a minister, no longer pleasant to me as a Christian, was a spectacle that must necessarily add the bitterness of mortification to the sadness of despair. I now see a long winter before me, and am to get through it as I can. I know the ground before I tread upon it; it is hollow, it is agitated, it suffers shocks in every direction; it is like the soil of Calabria, all whirlpool and undulation; but I must reel through it,—at least if I be not swallowed up by the way.

Mr. Scott has been ill almost ever since you left us. This light atmosphere, and these unremitting storms, are very unfriendly to an asthmatic habit. He suffers accordingly; and last Saturday, as on many foregoing Saturdays, was obliged to clap on a blister by way of preparation for his Sunday labours. He cannot draw breath upon any other terms. If holy orders were always conferred upon such conditions, I question but even bishopricks themselves would want an occupant. But he is easy and cheerful, and likes his wages well.

I beg you will mention me kindly to Mr. Bacon, and make him sensible that if I did not write the paragraph he wished for, it was not owing to any want of respect for the desire he expressed, but to mere inability. If in a state of mind that almost disqualifies me for society, I could possibly wish to form a new connexion, I should wish to know him; but I never shall, and things being as they are, I do not regret it. You are my old friend, therefore I do not spare you; having known you in better days, I make you pay for any pleasure I might then afford you, by a communication of my present pains. But I have no claims of this sort upon Mr. Bacon.

Be pleased to remember us both, with much affection to Mrs. Newton, and to her and your Eliza; to Miss Catlett likewise, if she is with you. Poor Eliza droops and languishes, but in the land to which she is going, she will hold up her head and droop no more. A sickness that leads the way to everlasting life is better than the life of an antediluvian. Accept our united love. *My dear friend*, sincerely yours, W. C.

Lady Austen desires me to add her compliments.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Sept. 23, 1783.

WE are glad that having been attacked by a fever, which has often proved fatal, and almost always leaves the sufferer debilitated to the last degree, you find yourself so soon restored to health, and your strength recovered. *Your* health and strength are useful to others, and in that view important in *his* account who dispenses both, and by your means a more precious gift than either. For my own part, though I have not been laid up, I have never been perfectly well since you left us. A smart fever, which lasted indeed but a few hours, succeeded by lassitude and want of spirits, that seemed still to indicate a feverish habit, has made for some time, and still makes me very unfit for my favourite occupations, writing and reading;—so that even a letter, and even a letter to you, is not without its burthen. An emetic which I took yesterday, has, I believe, done me more good than any thing, but I shall be able to ascertain that point better when I have recovered from the fatigue of it. John Line has had the epidemic, and has it still, but grows better. When he was first seized with it, he gave notice that he should die, but in this only instance of prophetic exertion he seems to have been mistaken: he has however, been very near it. Bett Fisher was buried last night: she died of the distemper. Molly Clifton is dying, but of a decline. I should have told you, that poor John has been very ready to depart, and much comforted through his whole illness. He, you know, though a silent, has been a very steady professor, and therefore, though but a botcher, which is somewhat less than a tailor, seems to have been more than a match for the last enemy. Oh, what things pass in cottages and hovels, which the great never dream of! French philosophers amuse themselves, and, according to their own phrase, cover themselves with glory, by inventing air-balls, which, by their own buoyancy, ascend above the clouds, and are lost in regions which no human contrivance could ever penetrate before. An English tailor, an inhabitant of the dunghills of Silver End, prays, and his prayer ascends into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. He indeed covers himself with glory, fights battles, and gains victories, but makes no noise. Europe is not astonished at *his feats*, foreign Academies do not seek him for a member; he

will never discover the art of flying, or send a globe of taffeta up up to heaven. But he will go thither himself. I am afraid there is hardly a philosopher among them that would be wise enough to change conditions with him if he could, yet certainly there is not one that would not be infinitely a gainer by doing so.

Since you went, we dined with Mr. Bull at Newport. I had sent him notice of our visit a week before, which, like a contemplative, studious man, as he is, he put in his pocket and forgot. When we arrived, the parlour windows were shut, and the house had the appearance of being uninhabited. After waiting some time, however, the maid opened the door, and the master presented himself. Mrs. Bull and her son were gone to Bedford, but having found what we chiefly wanted, we dined and spent the afternoon together comfortably enough. It is hardly worth while to observe so repeatedly that his garden seems a spot contrived only for the growth of melancholy; but being always affected by it in the same way I cannot help it. He showed me a nook, in which he had placed a bench, and where he said he found it very refreshing to smoke his pipe and meditate. Here he sits, with his back against one brick wall, and his nose against another, which must, you know, be very refreshing, and greatly assist meditation. He rejoices the more in this niche, because it is an acquisition made at some expense, and with no small labour; several loads of earth were removed in order to make it,—which loads of earth, had I the management of them, I should carry thither again, and fill up a place more fit in appearance to be a repository for the dead than the living. I would on no account put any man out of conceit with his innocent enjoyments, and therefore never tell him my thoughts upon this subject; but he is not seldom low-spirited, and I cannot but suspect that his situation helps to make him so.

Mrs. Unwin begs that Mrs. Newton will be so kind as to buy her a box-comb, with fine teeth on both sides. She hopes the ham arrived safe.

I shall be obliged to you for Hawkesworth's Voyages, when it can be sent conveniently. The long evenings are beginning, and nothing shortens them so effectually as reading aloud.

Lady Austen returns her compliments. The Jones's are gone

to Brighton. Mr. Page has warning to quit Ranstone. Mr. Scott is better than he has been, but so weak that he is obliged to ride to Weston. Mrs. Unwin is well, and bids me assure you of our joint love, which I would be understood to do in the warmest terms, and with the greatest sincerity. Our love likewise attends Eliza. Yours, my dear friend, W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, Sept. 29, 1783.

We are sorry that you and your household partake so largely of the ill effects of this unhealthy season. You are happy however in having hitherto escaped the epidemic fever, which has prevailed much in this part of the kingdom, and carried many off. Your mother and I are well. After more than a fortnight's indisposition, which slight appellation is quite adequate to the description of all I suffered, I am at length restored by a grain or two of emetic tartar. It is a tax I generally pay in autumn. By this time, I hope, a purer ether than we have seen for months, and these brighter suns than the summer had to boast, have cheered your spirits, and made your existence more comfortable. We are rational; but we are animal too, and therefore subject to the influences of the weather. The cattle in the fields show evident symptoms of lassitude and disgust in an unpleasant season; and we, their lords and masters, are constrained to sympathize with them; the only difference between us is, that they know not the cause of their dejection, and we do,—but, for our humiliation, are equally at a loss to cure it. Upon this account I have sometimes wished myself a philosopher. How happy, in comparison with myself, does the sagacious investigator of nature seem, whose fancy is ever employed in the invention of *hypotheses*, and his reason in the support of them! While he is accounting for the origin of the winds, he has no leisure to attend to their influence upon himself; and while he considers what the sun is made of, forgets that he has not shone for a month. One project indeed supplants another. The *vortices* of Descartes gave way to the gravitation of Newton, and this again is threatened by the electrical fluid of a modern. One generation blows bubbles, and the next breaks them. But in the mean time your philosopher is a happy man. He escapes a thousand inquietudes to which the indolent are subject, and

finds his occupation, whether it be the pursuit of a butterfly, or a demonstration, the wholesomest exercise in the world. As he proceeds, he applauds himself. His discoveries, though eventually perhaps they prove but dreams, are to him realities. The world gaze at him, as he does at new phenomena in the heavens, and perhaps understand him as little. But this does not prevent their praises, nor at all disturb him in the enjoyment of that self-complacence, to which his imaginary success entitles him. He wears his honours while he lives, and if another strips them off when he has been dead a century, it is no great matter; he can then make shift without them.

I have said a great deal upon this subject, and know not what it all amounts to. I did not intend a syllable of it when I began. But *currente calamo,* I stumbled upon it. My end is to amuse myself and you. The former of these two points is secured. I shall be happy if I do not miss the latter.

By the way, what is your opinion of these air balloons? I am quite charmed with the discovery. Is it not possible (do you suppose) to convey such a quantity of inflammable air into the stomach and abdomen, that the philosopher, no longer gravitating to a centre, shall ascend by his own comparative levity, and never stop till he has reached the medium exactly *in equilibrio* with himself? May he not by the help of a pasteboard rudder, attached to his posteriors, steer himself in that purer element with ease; and again by a slow and gradual discharge of his aerial contents, recover his former tendency to the earth, and descend without the smallest danger or inconvenience? These things are worth inquiry; and (I dare say) they will be inquired after as they deserve. The *pennæ non homini datæ* are likely to be less regretted than they were; and perhaps a flight of academicians and a covey of fine ladies may be no uncommon spectacle in the next generation. A letter which appeared in the public prints last week convinces me, that the learned are not without hopes of some such improvement upon this discovery. The author is a sensible and ingenious man, and under a reasonable apprehension that the ignorant may feel themselves inclined to laugh upon a subject that affects himself with the utmost seriousness, with much good manners and management, bespeaks their patience, suggesting many good consequences that may result from a course of experiments upon this machine,

and amongst others, that it may be of use in ascertaining the shape of continents and islands, and the face of wide-extended and far distant countries; an end not to be hoped for, unless by these means of extraordinary elevation the human prospect may be immensely enlarged, and the philosopher, exalted to the skies, attain a view of the whole hemisphere at once. But whether he is to ascend by the mere inflation of his person, as hinted above, or whether in a sort of band-box, supported upon balloons, is not yet apparent, nor (I suppose) even in his own idea perfectly decided.

Yours, my dear William, W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Oct. 6, 1783.

It is indeed a melancholy consideration, that the Gospel, whose direct tendency is to promote the happiness of mankind in the present life, as well as in the life to come, and which so effectually answers the design of its Author, whenever it is well understood and sincerely believed, should through the ignorance, the bigotry, the superstition of its professors, and the ambition of popes, and princes the tools of popes, have produced incidentally so much mischief; only furnishing the world with a plausible excuse to worry each other, while they sanctified the worst cause with the specious pretext of zeal for the furtherance of the best.

Angels descend from Heaven to publish peace between man and his Maker; the Prince of Peace himself comes to confirm and establish it, and war, hatred, and desolation are the consequence. Thousands quarrel about the interpretation of a book which none of them understand. He that is slain dies firmly persuaded that the crown of martyrdom expects him; and he that slew him is equally convinced that he has done God service. In reality they are both mistaken, and equally unentitled to the honour they arrogate to themselves. If a multitude of blind men should set out for a certain city, and dispute about the right road till a battle ensued between them, the probable effect would be that none of them would ever reach it; and such a fray, preposterous and shocking in the extreme would exhibit a picture in some degree resembling the original of which we have been speaking. And why is not the world *thus occupied* at present?—even because they have exchanged

a zeal, that was no better than madness, for an indifference equally pitiable and absurd. The holy sepulchre has lost its importance in the eyes of nations called Christians, not because the light of true wisdom has delivered them from a superstitious attachment to the spot, but because He that was buried in it is no longer regarded by them as the Saviour of the world. The exercise of reason, enlightened by philosophy, has cured them indeed of the misery of an absurd understanding, but together with the delusion they have lost the substance, and for the sake of the lies that were grafted upon it have quarrelled with the truth itself. Here then we see the *ne plus ultrà* of human wisdom, at least in affairs of religion. It enlightens the mind with respect to non-essentials, but with respect to that in which the essence of Christianity consists, leaves it perfectly in the dark. It can discover many errors that in different ages have disgraced the faith; but it is only to make way for the admission of one more fatal than them all, which represents that faith itself as a delusion. Why those evils have been permitted shall be known hereafter. One thing in the mean time is certain, that the folly and frenzy of the professed disciples of the Gospel have been more dangerous to its interests, than all the avowed hostilities of its adversaries; and perhaps for this cause these mischiefs might be suffered to prevail for a season, that its divine original and nature might be the more illustrated, when it should appear that it was able to stand its ground for ages against that most formidable of all attacks, the indiscretion of its friends. The outrages that have followed this perversion of the truth have proved indeed a stumbling-block to individuals; the wise of this world, with all their wisdom, have not been able to distinguish between the blessing and the abuse of it. Voltaire was offended, and Gibbon has turned his back; but the flock of Christ is still nourished, and still increases, notwithstanding the unbelief of a philosopher is able to convert bread into a stone, and a fish into a serpent.

I am much obliged to you for the voyages, which I received, and began to read last night. My imagination is so captivated upon these occasions, that I seem to partake with the navigators in all the dangers they encountered. I lose my anchor; my mainsail is rent into shreds; I kill a shark, and by signs converse with a Patagonian, and all this without moving from

the fireside. The principal fruits of these circuits, that have been made around the globe, seem likely to be the amusement of those that staid at home. Discoveries have been made, but such discoveries as will hardly satisfy the expense of such undertakings. We brought away an Indian, and having debauched him, we sent him home again to communicate the infection to his country; fine sport to be sure, but such as will not defray the cost. Nations that live upon bread-fruit, and have no mines to make them worthy of our acquaintance, will be but little visited for the future. So much the better for them! their poverty is indeed their mercy.

Yours, my dear friend, W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, October, 1783.

I AM much obliged to you for your American anecdotes, and feel the obligation perhaps more sensibly, the labour of transcribing being in particular that to which I myself have the greatest aversion. The Loyalists are much to be pitied; driven from all the comforts that depend upon and are intimately connected with a residence in their native land, and sent to cultivate a distant one, without the means of doing it; abandoned too, through a deplorable necessity, by the government to which they have sacrificed all,—they exhibit a spectacle of distress, which one cannot view even at this distance without participating in what they feel. Why could not some of our useless wastes and forests have been allotted to their support? To have built them houses indeed, and to have furnished them with implements of husbandry, would have put us to no small expense; but I suppose the increase of population, and the improvement of the soil, would soon have been felt as a national advantage, and have indemnified the state, if not enriched it. But I am afraid that nothing so virtuous, or so wise, is to be looked for in the public measures of the present day. We are bountiful to foreigners, and neglect those of our own household. I remember that, compassionating the miseries of the Portuguese, at the time of the Lisbon earthquake, we sent them a ship-load of tools to clear away the rubbish with, and to assist them in rebuilding the city. I remember, too, it was reported at the time, that the court of Portugal accepted *our wheel-barrows* and spades with a very ill grace, and treated

our bounty with contempt. An act like this in behalf of our brethren, carried only a little further, might possibly have redeemed them from ruin, have resulted in emolument to ourselves, have been received with joy, and repaid with gratitude. Such are my speculations upon the subject, who not being a politician by profession, and very seldom giving my attention for a moment to any such matter, may not be aware of difficulties and objections, which they of the cabinet can discern with half an eye. Perhaps to have taken under our protection a race of men proscribed by the Congress might be thought dangerous to the interests we hope to have hereafter in their high and mighty regards and affections. It is ever the way of those who rule the earth, to leave out of their reckoning Him who rules the universe. They forget that the poor have a friend more powerful to avenge, than they can be to oppress, and that treachery and perfidy must therefore prove bad policy in the end. The Americans themselves appear to me to be in a situation little less pitiable than that of the deserted Loyalists. A revolt can hardly be said to have been successful that has exchanged only an apprehended tyranny for a real one, and has shaken off the restraints of a well ordered government, merely to give room and opportunity for the jarring opinions and interests of its abetters to throw all into a state of anarchy. This is evidently the case at present, and without a special interposition of Providence is likely to be for years to come. They will at last, perhaps, after much ill temper and bloodshed, settle into some sort of establishment; but hardly, I think, into a more desirable one (and it seems they themselves are pretty much of the same opinion) than they enjoyed before. Their fears of arbitrary imposition were certainly well founded. A struggle therefore might be necessary, in order to prevent it, and this end might surely have been answered without a renunciation of dependence. But the passions of a whole people, once put in motion, are not soon quieted. Contest begets aversion, a little success inspires more ambitious hopes, and thus a slight quarrel terminates at last in a breach never to be healed, and perhaps in the ruin of both parties. It does not seem likely, that a country so distinguished by the Creator with every thing that can make it desirable, should be given up to desolation for ever; and they possibly may have reason on their side, who suppose that in time it will have the pre-

eminence over all others; but the day of such prosperity seems far distant: Omnipotence indeed can hasten it, and it may dawn when it is least expected. But we govern ourselves in all our reasonings by present appearances. Persons at least no better informed than myself are constrained to do so.

You surprised me most agreeably with a polite and sensible letter from Mr. Bacon: that good man has a place in my heart, though I never saw him, and never may. I shall never see the print he so obligingly presents me with, without sentiments of gratitude and friendship, and shall endeavour to answer his letter in such terms as his kindness justly claims, as soon as the print arrives.

We have opened two of the cocoa nuts: one naught and the other excellent; the third promises to be a good one. I intended to have taken another subject when I began, and I wish I had. No man living is less qualified to settle nations than I am; but when I write to you, I talk,—that is, I write as fast as my pen can run, and on this occasion it ran away with me. I acknowledge myself in your debt for your last favour, but cannot pay you now, unless you will accept as payment, what I know you value more than all I can say beside, the most unfeigned assurances of my affection for you and yours.

Yours, &c. W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Oct. 20, 1783.

I SHOULD not have been thus long silent, had I known with certainty where a letter of mine might find you. Your summer excursions however are now at an end, and addressing a line to you in the centre of the busy scene in which you spend your winter, I am pretty sure of my mark.

I see the winter approaching without much concern, though a passionate lover of fine weather and the pleasant scenes of summer; but the long evenings have their comforts too, and there is hardly to be found upon the earth, I suppose, so snug a creature as an Englishman by his fireside in the winter. I mean however an Englishman that lives in the country, for in London it is not very easy to avoid intrusion. I have two ladies to read to, sometimes more, but never less. At present we are circumnavigating the globe, and I find the old story with which I amused myself some years since, through the great felicity of a memory not very retentive, almost new. I am

however sadly at a loss for Cook's voyage, can you send it? I shall be glad of Foster's too. These together will make the winter pass merrily, and you will much oblige me.

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Oct. 20, 1783.

I HAVE nothing to say on political subjects, for two reasons; first, because I know none that at present would prove very amusing, especially to you who love your country; and, secondly, because there are none that I have the vanity to think myself qualified to discuss. I must beg leave, however, to rejoice a little at the failure of the Caisse d'Escomptes, because I think the French have well deserved it; and to mourn equally that the Royal George cannot be weighed: the rather, because I wrote two poems, one Latin and one English, to encourage the attempt. The former of these only having been published, which the sailors would understand but little of, may be the reason, perhaps, why they have not succeeded.

Believe me, my friend,

Affectionately yours, W^M. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Oct 22, 1783.

I HAVE made a point of saying no fine things to Mr. Bacon, upon occasion that would well have justified them; deterred by a *Caveat* he entered in his letter. Nothing can be more handsome than the present, nor more obliging than the manner in which he has made it. I take it for granted that the plate is, line for line, and stroke for stroke, an exact representation of his performance, as nearly at least, as light and shade can exhibit, upon a flat surface, the effect of a piece of statuary. I may be allowed therefore to say that I admire it. My situation affords me no opportunity to cultivate the science of connoisseurship; neither would there be much propriety in my speaking the language of one to you, who disclaim the character. But we both know when we are pleased. It occurs to me, however, that I ought to say what it is that pleases me, for a general commendation, where there are so many particular beauties, would be insipid and unjust.

I think the figure of Lord Chatham singularly graceful, and his countenance *full of the* character that belongs to him. It

speaks not only great ability and consummate skill, but a tender and heartfelt interest in the welfare of the charge committed to him. In the figure of the City, there is all that *empressement* (pardon a French term, it expresses my idea better than any English one that occurs,) that the importance of her errand calls for; and it is noble in its air, though in a posture of supplication. But the figure of Commerce is indeed a perfect beauty. It is a literal truth, that I felt the tears flush into my eyes while I looked at her. The idea of so much elegance and grace having found so powerful a protection, was irresistible. There is a complacency and serenity in the air and countenance of Britannia, more suited to her dignity than that exultation and triumph which a less judicious hand might have dressed her in. She seems happy to sit at the feet of her deliverer.—I have most of the monuments in the Abbey by heart, but I recollect none that ever gave me so much pleasure. The faces are all expressive, and the figures are all graceful.—If you think the opinion of so unlearned a spectator worth communicating, and that I have not said more than Mr. Bacon's modesty can bear without offence, you are welcome to make him privy to my sentiments. I know not why he should be hurt by just praise; his fine talent is a gift, and all the merit of it is His property who gave it.

We were sorry to be told by Mr. Jones that you are neither of you well, and heartily wish you may be able to tell us in your next that you are better. Our love to Mrs. Newton.

Believe me, my dear friend,

Sincerely and affectionately yours, W^M^. COWPER.

I am out of your debt.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, Nov. 10, 1783.

I HAVE lost and wasted almost all my writing time, in making an alteration in the verses I either enclose or subjoin, for I know not which will be the case at present[1]. If prose comes readily, I shall transcribe them on another sheet, otherwise, on this. You will understand, before you have read many of them, that they are not for the press. I lay you under no other injunctions. The unkind behaviour of our acquaintance, though it is possible that in some instances it may not much

[1] The Valediction.

affect our happiness, nor engage many of our thoughts, will sometimes obtrude itself upon us with a degree of importunity not easily resisted; and then perhaps, though almost insensible of it before, we feel more than the occasion will justify. In such a moment it was that I conceived this poem, and gave loose to a degree of resentment, which perhaps I ought not to have indulged, but which in a cooler hour I cannot altogether condemn. My former intimacy with the two characters was such, that I could not but feel myself provoked by the neglect with which they both treated me on a late occasion. So much by way of preface.

You ought not to have supposed that if you had visited us last summer, the pleasure of the interview would have been all your own. By such an imagination you wrong both yourself and us. Do you suppose we do not love you? You cannot suspect your mother of coldness; and as to me, assure yourself I have no friend in the world with whom I communicate without the least reserve, yourself excepted. Take heart then, and when you find a favourable opportunity to come, assure yourself of such a welcome from us both as you have a right to look for. But I have observed in your two last letters somewhat of a dejection and melancholy, that I am afraid you do not sufficiently strive against. I suspect you of being too sedentary. "You cannot walk." Why you cannot is best known to yourself. I am sure your legs are long enough, and your person does not overload them. But I beseech you ride, and ride often. I think I have heard you say, you cannot even do that without an object. Is not health an object? Is not a new prospect, which in most countries is gained at the end of every mile, an object? Assure yourself that easy chairs are no friends to cheerfulness, and that a long winter spent by the fireside is a prelude to an unhealthy spring. Every thing I see in the fields is to me an object, and I can look at the same rivulet, or at a handsome tree, every day of my life, with new pleasure. This indeed is partly the effect of a natural taste for rural beauty, and partly the effect of habit; for I never in all my life have let slip the opportunity of breathing fresh air, and of conversing with nature, when I could fairly catch it. I earnestly recommend a cultivation of the same taste to you, suspecting that you have neglected it, and suffer for doing so.

Last Saturday se'nnight, the moment I had composed myself in my bed, your mother too having just got into hers, we were alarmed by a cry of fire on the staircase. I immediately rose, and saw sheets of flame above the roof of Mr. Palmer's house, our opposite neighbour. The mischief however was not so near to him as it seemed to be, having begun in a butcher's yard, at a little distance. We made all haste down stairs, and soon threw open the street door, for the reception of as much lumber, of all sorts, as our house would hold, brought into it by several who thought it necessary to move their furniture. In two hours time we had so much that we could hold no more, even the uninhabited part of our building being filled. Not that we ourselves were entirely secure—an adjoining thatch, on which fell showers of sparks, being rather a dangerous neighbour. Providentially, however, the night was perfectly calm, and we escaped. By four in the morning it was extinguished, having consumed many out-buildings, but no dwelling-house. Your mother suffered a little in her health, from the fatigue and bustle of the night, but soon recovered. As for me, it hurt me not. The slightest wind would have carried the fire to the very extremity of the town, there being multitudes of thatched buildings and faggot-piles so near to each other, that they must have proved infallible conductors.

The balloons prosper: and I congratulate you upon it. Thanks to Montgolfier, we shall fly at last.

Yours, my dear friend, W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Nov. 17, 1783.

A PARCEL arrived last night, the contents of which shall be disposed of according to order. We thank Mrs. Newton (not from the teeth outwards) for the tooth-brushes.

The country around us is much alarmed with apprehensions of fire. Two have happened since that of Olney. One at Hitchin, where the damage is said to amount to eleven thousand pounds, and another, at a place not far from Hitchin, of which I have not learnt the name. Letters have been dropped at Bedford, threatening to burn the town; and the inhabitants have been so intimidated as to have placed a guard in many parts of it, several nights past. Some madman or some devil *has broke loose*, who it is to be hoped will pay dear for these

effusions of his malignity. Since our conflagration here, we have sent two women and a boy to the justice, for depredation; Sue Riviss, for stealing a piece of beef, which, in her excuse, she said she intended to take care of. This lady, whom you well remember, escaped for want of evidence; not that evidence was indeed wanting, but our men of Gotham judged it unnecessary to send it. With her went the woman I mentioned before, who, it seems, has made some sort of profession, but upon this occasion allowed herself a latitude of conduct rather inconsistent with it, having filled her apron with wearing apparel, which she likewise intended to take care of. She would have gone to the county goal, had Billy Raban, the baker's son, who prosecuted, insisted upon it; but he good-naturedly, though I think weakly, interposed in her favour, and begged her off. The young gentleman who accompanied these fair ones, is the junior son of Molly Boswell. He had stolen some iron-work, the property of Griggs, the butcher. Being convicted, he was ordered to be whipt, which operation he underwent at the cart's tail, from the stone-house to the high arch, and back again. He seemed to show great fortitude, but it was all an imposition upon the public. The beadle, who performed, had filled his left hand with red ochre, through which, after every stroke, he drew the lash of his whip, leaving the appearance of a wound upon the skin, but in reality not hurting him at all. This being perceived by Mr. Constable Hinschcomb, who followed the beadle, he applied his cane, without any such management or precaution, to the shoulders of the too merciful executioner. The scene immediately became more interesting. The beadle could by no means be prevailed upon to strike hard, which provoked the constable to still harder; and this double flogging continued, till a lass of Silver-end, pitying the pitiful beadle thus suffering under the hands of the pitiless constable, joined the procession, and placing herself immediately behind the latter, seized him by his capillary club, and pulling him backwards by the same, slapt his face with a most Amazonian fury. This concatenation of events has taken up more of my paper than I intended it should, but I could not forbear to inform you how the beadle threshed the thief, the constable the beadle, and the lady the constable, and how the thief was the only person concerned who suffered nothing. Mr. Teedon has been

here, and is gone again. He came to thank me for an old pair of breeches. In answer to our enquiries after his health, he replied that he had a slow fever, which made him take all possible care not to inflame his blood. I admitted his prudence, but in his particular instance, could not very clearly discern the need of it. Pump water will not heat him much; and, to speak a little in his own style, more inebriating fluids are to him, I fancy, not very attainable. He brought us news, the truth of which, however, I do not vouch for, that the town of Bedford was actually on fire yesterday, and the flames not extinguished when the bearer of the tidings left it.

Swift observes, when he is giving his reasons why the preacher is elevated always above his hearers, that let the crowd be as great as it will below, there is always room enough over-head. If the French philosophers can carry their art of flying to the perfection they desire, the observation may be reversed, the crowd will be over-head, and they will have most room who stay below. I can assure you, however, upon my own experience, that this way of travelling is very delightful. I dreamt, a night or two since, that I drove myself through the upper regions in a balloon and pair, with the greatest ease and security. Having finished the tour I intended, I made a short turn, and, with one flourish of my whip, descended; my horses prancing and curvetting with an infinite share of spirit, but without the least danger, either to me or my vehicle. The time, we may suppose, is at hand, and seems to be prognosticated by my dream, when these airy excursions will be universal, when judges will fly the circuit, and bishops their visitations; and when the tour of Europe will be performed with much greater speed, and with equal advantage, by all who travel merely for the sake of having it to say, that they have made it.

I beg you will accept for yourself and yours our unfeigned love, and remember me affectionately to Mr. Bacon, when you see him. Yours, my dear friend, W^M^. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Nov. 23, 1783.

YOUR opinion of voyages and travels would spoil an appetite less keen than mine; but being pretty much, perhaps more than any man who can be said to enjoy his liberty, confined to a spot, and being very desirous of knowing all that can be

known of this same planet of ours, while I have the honour to belong to it,—and having, besides, no other means of information at my command, I am constrained to be satisfied with narratives, not always, indeed, to be implicitly depended upon, but which, being subjected to the exercise of a little consideration, cannot materially deceive us. Swinburne's is a book I had fixed upon, and determined, if possible to procure, being pleased with some extracts from it, which I found in the Review. I need hardly add that I shall be much obliged to Mrs. Hill for a sight of it. I account myself truly and much indebted to that lady for the trouble she is so kind as to take upon my account, and shall esteem myself her debtor for all the amusement I meet with, in the southern hemisphere, should I be so fortunate as to get there. My reading is pretty much circumscribed, both by want of books and the influence of particular reasons. Politics are my abhorrence, being almost always hypothetical, fluctuating, and impracticable. Philosophy—I should have said natural philosophy, mathematically studied, does not suit me; and such exhibitions of that subject, as are calculated for less learned readers, I have read in former days, and remember in the present. Poetry, English poetry, I never touch, being pretty much addicted to the writing of it, and knowing that much intercourse with those gentlemen betrays us unavoidably into a habit of imitation, which I hate and despise most cordially.

I am glad my uncle is so well, and that he found new beauties in so old an acquaintance as the scene at Hastings. My most affectionate respects to him, if you please, when you see him next.—If *he* be the happiest man, who has least money in the funds, there are few upon earth whom I have any occasion to envy. I would consent, however, to have my pounds multiplied into thousands, even at the hazard of all I might feel from that tormenting passion. I send nothing to the papers myself, but Unwin sometimes sends for me. His receptacle of my squibs is the Public Advertiser; but they are very few, and my present occupations are of a kind that will still have a tendency to make them fewer. Yours, my dear friend,

W^M^. COWPER.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, Nov. 24, 1783.

An evening unexpectedly retired, and which your mother and

I spend without company (an occurrence far from frequent), affords me a favourable opportunity to write by to-morrow's post, which else I could not have found. You are very good to consider my literary necessities with so much attention, and I feel proportionably grateful. Blair's Lectures (though I suppose they must make a part of my private studies, not being *ad captum fœminarum)* will be perfectly welcome.

You say you felt my verses; I assure you that in this you followed my example, for I felt them first. A man's lordship is nothing to me, any further than in connexion with qualities that entitle him to my respect. If he thinks himself privileged by it to treat me with neglect, I am his humble servant, and shall never be at a loss to render him an equivalent. I am however most angry with the manager. He has published a book since he received mine, and has not vouchsafed to send it me; a requital which good manners, not to say the remembrance of former friendship, ought to have suggested. I will not, however, belie my knowledge of mankind so much, as to seem surprised at treatment which I had abundant reason to expect. To these men, with whom I was once intimate, and for many years, I am no longer necessary, no longer convenient, or in any respect an object. They think of me as of the man in the moon, and whether I have a lantern, a dog and a faggot, or whether I have neither of those desirable accommodations, is to them a matter of perfect indifference: upon that point we are agreed, our indifference is mutual, and were I to publish again, which is not impossible, I should give them a proof it.

L'Estrange's Josephus has lately furnished us with evening lectures. But the historian is so tediously circumstantial, and the translator so insupportably coarse and vulgar, that we are all three weary of him. How would Tacitus have shone upon such a subject, great master as he was of the art of description, concise without obscurity, and affecting without being poetical. But so it was ordered, and for wise reasons no doubt, that the greatest calamities any people ever suffered, and an accomplishment of one of the most signal prophecies in the Scripture, should be recorded by one of the worst writers. The man was a temporizer too, and courted the favour of his Roman masters at the expense of his own creed; or else an infidel, and absolutely disbelieved it. You will think me very difficult to

please; I quarrel with Josephus for the want of elegance, and with some of our modern historians for having too much. With him, for running right forward like a gazette, without stopping to make a single observation by the way; and with them, for pretending to delineate characters that existed two thousand years ago, and to discover the motives by which they were influenced, with the same precision as if they had been their contemporaries. Simplicity is become a very rare quality in a writer. In the decline of great kingdoms, and where refinement in all the arts is carried to an excess, I suppose it is always rare. The latter Roman writers are remarkable for false ornament, they were yet no doubt admired by the readers of their own day; and with respect to authors of the present era, the most popular among them appear to me equally censurable on the same account. Swift and Addison were simple; Pope knew how to be so, but was frequently tinged with affectation; since their day I hardly know a celebrated writer who deserves the character. But your mother wants room for a postscript, so my lecture must conclude abruptly.

Yours, W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

It is hard upon us striplings who have uncles still living (N.B. I myself have an uncle still alive,) that those venerable gentlemen should stand in our way, even when the ladies are in question; that I, for instance, should find in one page of your letter a hope that Miss Shuttleworth would be of your party, and be told in the next that she is engaged to your uncle. Well, we may perhaps never be uncles; but we may reasonably hope that the time is coming, when others, as young as we are now, shall envy us the privileges of old age, and see us engross that share in the attention of the ladies to which their youth must aspire in vain. Make our compliments if you please to your sister Elizabeth, and tell her that we are both mortified at having missed the pleasure of seeing her.

Balloons are so much the mode, that even in this country we have attempted a balloon. You may possibly remember that at a place called Weston, little more than a mile from Olney, there lives a family whose name is Throckmorton. The present possessor of the estate is a young man whom I

remember a boy. He has a wife, who is young, genteel, and handsome. They are Papists, but much more amiable than many Protestants. We never had any intercourse with the family, though ever since we lived here we have enjoyed the range of their pleasure grounds, having been favoured with a key, which admits us into all. When this man succeeded to the estate, on the death of his elder brother, and came to settle at Weston, I sent him a complimentary card, requesting the continuance of that privilege, having till then enjoyed it by the favour of his mother, who on that occasion went to finish her days at Bath. You may conclude that he granted it, and for about two years nothing more passed between us. A fortnight ago, I received an invitation in the civilest terms, in which he told me that the next day he should attempt to fill a balloon, and if it would be any pleasure to me to be present, should be happy to see me. Your mother and I went. The whole country were there, but the balloon could not be filled. The endeavour was, I believe, very philosophically made, but such a process depends for its success upon such niceties as make it very precarious. Our reception was however flattering to a great degree, insomuch that more notice seemed to be taken of us, than we could possibly have expected; indeed rather more than of any of his other guests. They even seemed anxious to recommend themselves to our regards. We drank chocolate, and were asked to dine, but were engaged. A day or two afterwards, Mrs. Unwin and I walked that way, and were overtaken in a shower. I found a tree that I thought would shelter us both,—a large elm, in a grove that fronts the mansion. Mrs. T. observed us, and running towards us in the rain insisted on our walking in. He was gone out. We sat chatting with her till the weather cleared up, and then at her instance took a walk with her in the garden. The garden is almost their only walk, and is certainly their only retreat in which they are not liable to interruption. She offered us a key of it in a manner that made it impossible not to accept it, and said she would send us one. A few days afterwards, in the cool of the evening, we walked that way again. We saw them going toward the house, and exchange bows and curtsies at a little distance, but did not join them. In a few minutes, when we had passed the house, and had almost reached the gate that opens out of the park into the adjoining

field, I heard the iron gate belonging to the court-yard ring, and saw Mr. T. advancing hastily toward us; we made equal haste to meet him, he presented to us the key, which I told him I esteemed a singular favour, and after a few such speeches as are made on such occasions, we parted. This happened about a week ago. I concluded nothing less, than that all this civility and attention was designed, on their part, as a prelude to a nearer acquaintance; but here at present the matter rests. I should like exceedingly to be on an easy footing there, to give a morning call, and now and then to receive one, but nothing more. For though he is one of the most agreeable men I ever saw, I could not wish to visit him in any other way, neither our house, furniture, servants, or income, being such as qualify us to make entertainments; neither would I on any account be introduced to the neighbouring gentry, which must be the consequence of our dining there, there not being a man in the country, except himself, with whom I could endure to associate. They are squires, merely such, purse-proud and sportsmen. But Mr. T. is altogether a man of fashion, and respectable on every account.

I have told you a long story. Farewell. We number the days as they pass, and are glad that we shall see you and your sister soon. Yours, &c. W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Nov. 30, 1783.

I HAVE neither long visits to pay nor to receive, nor ladies to spend hours in telling me that which might be told in five minutes, yet often find myself obliged to be an economist of time, and to make the most of a short opportunity. Let our station be as retired as it may, there is no want of playthings and avocations, nor much need to seek them, in this world of ours. Business, or what presents itself to us under that imposing character, will find us out, even in the stillest retreat, and plead its importance, however trivial in reality, as a just demand upon our attention. It is wonderful how by means of such real or seeming necessities, my time is stolen away. I have just time to observe that time is short, and by the time I have made the observation, time is gone. I have wondered in former days at the patience of the Antediluvian world; that they could endure a life almost millenary, with so little variety as seems to have

fallen to their share. It is probable that they had much fewer employments than we. Their affairs lay in a narrower compass; their libraries were indifferently furnished; philosophical researches were carried on with much less industry and acuteness of penetration, and fiddles, perhaps, were not even invented. How then could seven or eight hundred years of life be supportable? I have asked this question formerly, and been at a loss to resolve it; but I think I can answer it now. I will suppose myself born a thousand years before Noah was born or thought of. I rise with the sun; I worship; I prepare my breakfast; I swallow a bucket of goats' milk, and a dozen good sizeable cakes. I fasten a new string to my bow, and my youngest boy, a lad of about thirty years of age, having played with my arrows till he has stript off all the feathers, I find myself obliged to repair them. The morning is thus spent in preparing for the chase, and it is become necessary that I should dine. I dig up my roots; I wash them; I boil them; I find them not done enough; I boil them again; my wife is angry; we dispute; we settle the point; but in the mean time the fire goes out, and must be kindled again. All this is very amusing. I hunt; I bring home the prey; with the skin of it I mend an old coat, or I make a new one. By this time the day is far spent; I feel myself fatigued, and retire to rest. Thus what with tilling the ground and eating the fruit of it, hunting and walking, and running, and mending old clothes, and sleeping and rising again, I can suppose an inhabitant of the primæval world so much occupied, as to sigh over the shortness of life, and to find at the end of many centuries, that they had all slipt through his fingers, and were passed away like a shadow. What wonder then that I, who live in a day of so much greater refinement, when there is so much more to be wanted, and wished, and to be enjoyed, should feel myself now and then pinched in point of opportunity, and at some loss for leisure to fill four sides of a sheet like this? Thus, however, it is, and if the ancient gentlemen to whom I have referred, and their complaints of the disproportion of time to the occasions they had for it, will not serve me as an excuse, I must even plead guilty, and confess that I am often in haste, when I have no good reason for being so.

This by way of introduction; now for my letter. Mr. Scott *is desired* by Mr. De Coetlegon to contribute to the Theologi-

cal Review, of which, I suppose, that gentleman is a manager. He says he has insured your assistance, and at the same time desires mine, either in prose or verse. He did well to apply to you, because you can afford him substantial help; but as for me, had he known me better, he would never have suspected me for a theologian, either in rhyme or otherwise.

Lord Dartmouth's Mr. Wright spent near two hours with me this morning; a respectable old man, whom I always see with pleasure, both for his master's sake and for his own. I was glad to learn from him that his lordship has better health than he has enjoyed for some years. Believe me, my dear friend,

Your affectionate Wm. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Dec. 15, 1783.

I KNOW not how it fares with you, at a time when philosophy has just brought forth her most extraordinary production, not excepting, perhaps, that prodigy, a ship, in all respects complete, and equal to the task of circumnavigating the globe. My mind, however, is frequently getting into these balloons, and is busy in multiplying speculations as airy as the regions through which they pass. The last account from France, which seems so well authenticated, has changed my jocularity upon this occasion into serious expectation. The invention of these new vehicles is yet in its infancy, yet already they seem to have attained a degree of perfection which navigation did not reach, till ages of experience had matured it, and science had exhausted both her industry and her skill, in its improvement. I am aware, indeed, that the first boat or canoe that was ever formed, though rude in its construction—perhaps not constructed at all, being only a hollow tree that had fallen casually in the water, and which, though furnished with neither sails nor oars, might yet be guided by a pole—was a more perfect creature in its kind than a balloon at present; the single circumstance of its manageable nature giving it a clear superiority both in respect of safety and convenience. But the atmosphere, though a much thinner medium, we well know, resists the impression made upon it by the tail of a bird, as effectually as the water that of a ship's rudder. Pope, when inculcating one of his few useful lessons, and directing mankind to the providence of God as the true source of all their wisdom, says beautifully—

Learn of the little Nautilus to sail,
Spread the thin oar, and catch the driving gale.

It is easy to parody these lines, so as to give them an accommodation and suitableness to the present purpose.

Learn of the circle-making kite to fly,
Spread the fan-tail, and wheel about the sky.

It is certain, at least, that nothing within the reach of human ingenuity will be left unattempted to accomplish, and add all that is wanting to this last effort of philosophical contrivance. The approximating powers of the telescope, and the powers by which the thunder-storm is delivered of its contents peaceably and without mischief, were once, perhaps, in appearance more remote from discovery, and seemed less practicable, than we may now suppose it, to give direction to that which is already buoyant; especially possessed as we are of such consummate mechanical skill, already masters of principles which we have nothing to do but to apply, of which we have already availed ourselves in the similar case of navigation, and having in every fowl of the air a pattern, which now at length it may be sufficient to imitate. Wings and a tail, indeed, were of little use, while the body, so much heavier than the space of air it occupied, was sure to sink by its own weight, and could never be held in equipoise by any implements of the kind which human strength could manage. But now we float; at random, indeed, pretty much, and as the wind drives us; for want of nothing, however, but that steerage which invention, the conqueror of many equal, if not superior difficulties may be expected to supply.—Should the point be carried, and man at last become as familiar with the air as he has long been with the ocean, will it in its consequences prove a mercy, or a judgement? I think, a judgement. First, because if a power to convey himself from place to place, like a bird, would have been good for him, his Maker would have formed him with such a capacity. But he has been a groveller upon the earth for six thousand years, and now at last, when the close of this present state of things approaches, begins to exalt himself above it. So much the worse for *him*. Like a truant schoolboy, he breaks his bounds, and will have reason to repent of his presumption.—Secondly, I think it will prove a judgement, because with the exercise of very little foresight, it is easy to *prognosticate* a thousand evils which the project must necessa-

rily bring after it; amounting at last to the confusion of all order, the annihilation of all authority, with dangers both to property and person, and impunity to the offenders. Were I an absolute legislator, I would therefore make it death for a man to be convicted of flying, the moment he could be caught; and to bring him down from his altitudes by a bullet sent through his head or his carriage, should be no murder. Philosophers would call me a Vandal; the scholar would say that, had it not been for me, the fable of Dædalus would have been realized; and historians would load my memory with reproaches of phlegm, and stupidity, and oppression; but in the mean time the world would go on quietly, and if it enjoyed less liberty, would at least be more secure.

I know not what are your sentiments upon the subject of the East India Bill. This, too, has frequently afforded me matter of speculation. I can easily see that it is not without its blemishes; but its beauties, in my eye, are much predominant. Whatever may be its author's views, if he delivers so large a portion of mankind from such horrible tyranny as the East has suffered, he deserves a statue much more than Mongolfier, who, it seems, is to receive that honour. Perhaps he may bring our own freedom into jeopardy; but to do this for the sake of emancipating nations so much more numerous than ourselves, is at least generous, and a design that should have my encouragement, if I had any encouragement to afford it.

We are well, and love you. Remember us, as I doubt not you do, with the same affection, and be content with my sentiments upon subjects such as these, till I can send you, if that day should ever come, a letter more worthy of your reception.

Nous sommes les vôtres,

GUILLAUME ET MARIE.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Dec. 27, 1783.

THANKS to the patriotic junto, whose efforts have staved off the expected dissolution, franks have not yet lost their currency. Ignorant as they were that my writing by this post depended upon the existence of the present parliament, they have conducted their deliberations with a sturdiness and magnanimity that would almost tempt one to suppose that they had known it. So true it is, that the actions of men are con-

nected with consequences they are little aware of; and that events, comparatively trivial in themselves, may give birth to the most important.

My thoughts of ministers and men in power are nearly akin to yours. It is well for the public, when the rulers of a state are actuated by principles that may happen to coincide with its interests. The ambition of an individual has often been made subservient to the general good; and many a man has served his country, merely for the sake of immortalizing himself by doing it. So far, it seems to me, the natural man is to be trusted, and no farther. Self is at the bottom of all his conduct. If self can be pleased, flattered, enriched, exalted by his exertions, and his talents are such as qualify him for great usefulness, his country shall be the better for him. And this, perhaps, is all the patriotism we have a right to look for. In the mean time, however, I cannot but think such a man in some degree a respectable character, and am willing, at least, to do him honour, so far as I feel myself benefited by him. Ambition and the love of fame are certainly no Christian principles, but they are such as commonly belong to men of superior minds, and the fruits they produce may often plead their apology. The great men of the world are of a piece with the world to which they belong; they are raised up to govern it, and in the government of it are prompted by worldly motives: but it prospers perhaps, under their management; and when it does, the Christian world, which is totally a distinct creation, partaking of the advantage, has cause to be thankful. The sun is a glorious creature; he does much good, but without intending it. I, however, who am conscious of the good he does, though I know not what religion he is of, or whether he has any or none, rejoice in his effects, admire him, and am sensible that it is every man's duty to be thankful for him. In this sentiment I know you agree with me, for I believe he has not a warmer votary than yourself.

We say, the king can do no wrong; and it is well for poor George the Third that he cannot. In my opinion, however, he has lately been within a hair's-breadth of that predicament. His advisers, indeed, are guilty, and not he: but he will probably find, however hard it may seem, that if he can do no wrong he may yet suffer the consequences of the wrong he cannot do. He has dismissed his servants but not disgraced

them; they triumph in their degradation, and no man is willing to supply their places. Must their offices remain unoccupied, or must they be courted to resume them? Never was such a distracted state of things within my remembrance; and I much fear that this is but the beginning of sorrows. It is not a time of day for a king to take liberties with the people; there is a spirit in the Commons that will not endure it; and his Majesty's advisers must be less acquainted with the temper of the times than it is possible to suppose them, if they imagine that such strides of prerogative will not be resented. The address will gall him. I am sorry that he has exposed himself to such a reprehension, but I think it warranted by the occasion. I pity him; but king as he is, and much as I have always honoured him, had I been a member I should have voted for it.

I am obliged to Mr. Bacon for thinking of me. That expression, however, does not do justice to my feelings. Even with the little knowledge I have of him, I should love him, had I any reason to suppose myself at any time an object of his attention; but knowing that I am so happy as to have a share in his remembrance, I certainly love him the more. Truly I am not in his debt: I cannot say wherefore it is so, but certainly few days pass in which I do not remember *him*. The print, indeed, with which he favoured me, and which is always in my view, must often suggest the recollection of him; but though I greatly value it, I do not believe it is my only prompter.

I finish with what I wish may make you laugh, as it did me. Mr. Scott, exhorting the people to frequent prayer, closed his address thus:—"You have nothing to do but to ask, and you will ever find Him ready to bestow. Open your wide mouths, and he will fill them."

Mrs. Unwin is well. Accept an old but a true conclusion—our united love to you and yours, and believe me, my dear friend,

Your ever affectionate WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, Jan. 3, 1784.

YOUR silence began to be distressing both to your mother and me, and had I not received a letter from you last night, I

should have written by this post to enquire after your health. How can it be, that you, who are not stationary like me, but often change your situation and mix with a variety of company, should suppose me furnished with such abundant materials, and you yourself destitute? I assure you faithfully, that I do not find the soil of Olney prolific in the growth of such articles as make letter-writing a desirable employment. No place contributes less to the catalogue of incidents, or is more scantily supplied with anecdotes worth notice.

We have

> One parson, one poet, one belman, one crier,
> And the poor poet is our only 'squire.

Guess then if I have not more reason to expect two letters from you, than you one from me. The principal occurrence, and that which affects me most at present, came to pass this moment. The stair-foot door being swelled by the thaw, would do any thing better than it would open. An attempt to force it upon that office has been attended with such a horrible dissolution of its parts, that we were immediately obliged to introduce a chirurgeon, commonly called a carpenter, whose applications we have some hope will cure it of a locked jaw, and heal its numerous fractures. His medicines are powerful chalybeates, and a certain glutinous salve, which he tells me is made of the tails and ears of animals. The consequences however are rather unfavourable to my present employment, which does not well brook noise, bustle, and interruption.

This being the case, I shall not perhaps be either so perspicuous, or so diffuse, on the subject of which you desire my sentiments, as I should be; but I will do my best. Know then that I have learnt long since, of Abbé Raynal, to hate all monopolies, as injurious, howsoever managed, to the interests of commerce at large: consequently the charter in question would not at any rate be a favourite of mine. This however is of itself I confess no sufficient reason to justify the resumption of it. But such reasons I think are not wanting. A grant of that kind, it is well known, is always forfeited by the nonperformance of the conditions. And why not equally forfeited, if those conditions are exceeded, if the design of it be perverted, and its operation extended to objects which were *never in* the contemplation of the donor? This appears to me *to be no* misrepresentation of their case, whose charter is sup-

posed to be in danger. It constitutes them a trading company, and gives them an exclusive right to traffic in the East Indies. But it does no more. It invests them with no sovereignty; it does not convey to them the royal prerogative of making war and peace, which the king cannot alienate if he would. But this prerogative they have exercised, and, forgetting the terms of their institution, have possessed themselves of an immense territory, which they have ruled with a rod of iron, to which it is impossible they should ever have a right, unless such a one as it is a disgrace to plead,—the right of conquest. The potentates of this country they dash in pieces like a potter's vessel, as often as they please, making the happiness of thirty millions of mankind a consideration subordinate to that of their own emolument, oppressing them as often as it may serve a lucrative purpose, and in no instance, that I have ever heard, consulting their interest or advantage. That government therefore is bound to interfere, and to unking these tyrants, is to me self-evident. And if having subjugated so much of this miserable world, it is therefore necessary that we must keep possession of it, it appears to me a duty so binding upon the legislature to rescue it from the hands of those usurpers, that I should think a curse, and a bitter one, must follow the neglect of it. But suppose this were done, can they be legally deprived of their charter? In truth I think so. If the abuse and perversion of a charter can amount to a defeasance of it, never were they so grossly palpable as in this instance; never was charter so justly forfeited. Neither am I at all afraid that such a measure should be drawn into a precedent, unless it could be alleged as a sufficient reason for not hanging a rogue, that perhaps magistracy might grow wanton in the exercise of such a power, and now and then hang up an honest man for its amusement. When the governors of the bank shall have deserved the same severity, I hope they will meet with it. In the mean time I do not think them a whit more in jeopardy because a corporation of plunderers have been brought to justice.

We are well, and love you all. I never wrote in such a hurry, nor in such disturbance. Pardon the effects, and believe me yours affectionately, W. C.

TO MRS. HILL.

DEAR *MADAM*, Jan. 5, 1784.

You will readily pardon the trouble I give you by this line,

when I plead my attention to your husband's convenience in my excuse. I know him to be so busy a man, that I cannot in conscience trouble him with a commission, which I know it is impossible he should have leisure to execute. After all, the labour would devolve upon you, and therefore I may as well address you in the first instance.

I have read, and return the books you were so kind as to procure for me. Mr. Hill gave me hopes, in his last, that from the library, to which I have subscribed, I might still be supplied with more. I have not many more to wish for, nor do I mean to make any unreasonable use of your kindness. In about a fortnight I shall be favoured, by a friend in Essex, with as many as will serve me during the rest of the winter. In summer I read but little. In the mean time I shall be much obliged to you for Forster's Narrative of the same Voyage, if your librarian has it; and likewise for Swinburn's Travels, which Mr. Hill mentioned. If they can be sent at once, which perhaps the terms of subscription may not allow, I shall be glad to receive them so. If not, then Forster's first, and Swinburn afterwards: and Swinburn, at any rate, if Forster is not to be procured.

Reading over what I have written, I find it perfectly free and easy; so much indeed in that stile, that, had I not had repeated proofs of your good-nature in other instances, I should have modesty enough to suppress it, and attempt something more civil, and becoming a person who has never had the happiness of seeing you. But I have always observed, that sensible people are best pleased with what is natural and unaffected. Nor can I tell you a plainer truth, than that I am, without the least dissimulation, and with a warm remembrance of past favours, My dear Madam,

Your affectionate humble servant,

W^M^. COWPER.

I beg to be remembered to Mr. Hill.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Jan. 8, 1784.

I WISH you had more leisure, that you might oftener favour me with a page of politics. The authority of a newspaper is *not of sufficient* weight to determine my opinions, and I have *no other documents* to be set down by. I, therefore, on this

subject, am suspended in a state of constant scepticism, the most uneasy condition in which the judgement can find itself. But *your* politics have weight with me, because I know your independent spirit, the justness of your reasonings, and the opportunities you have of information. But I know likewise the urgency and the multiplicity of your concerns; and therefore, like a neglected clock, must be contented to go wrong, except when, perhaps twice in the year, you shall come to set me right.

Public credit is indeed shaken, and the funds at a low ebb. How can they be otherwise, when our western wing is already clipt to the stump, and the shears, at this moment, threaten our eastern. Low, however, as our public stock is, it is not lower than my private one; and this being the article that touches me most nearly, at present, I shall be obliged to you, if you will have recourse to such ways and means for the replenishment of my exchequer, as your wisdom may suggest, and your best ability suffice to execute. The experience I have had of your readiness upon all similar occasions, has been very agreeable to me; and I doubt not but upon the present I shall find you equally prompt to serve me. So,

Yours ever, W^M^. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Jan. 13, 1784.

I TOO have taken leave of the old year, and parted with it just when you did, but with very different sentiments and feelings upon the occasion. I looked back upon all the passages and occurrences of it, as a traveller looks back upon a wilderness, through which he has passed with weariness, and sorrow of heart, reaping no other fruit of his labour, than the poor consolation that, dreary as the desert was, he has left it all behind him. The traveller would find even this comfort considerably lessened, if, as soon as he had passed one wilderness, another of equal length, and equally desolate, should expect him. In this particular, his experience and mine would exactly tally. I should rejoice indeed that the old year is over and gone, if I had not every reason to prophesy a new one similar to it.

The new year is already old in my account. I am not, indeed, sufficiently second-sighted to be able to boast by antici-

pation an acquaintance with the events of it yet unborn, but rest convinced that, be they what they may, not one of them comes a messenger of good to me. If even death itself should be of the number, he is no friend of mine. It is an alleviation of the woes even of an unenlightened man, that he can wish for death, and indulge a hope, at least, that in death he shall find deliverance. But, loaded as my life is with despair, I have no such comfort as would result from a supposed probability of better things to come, were it once ended. For, more unhappy than the traveller with whom I set out, pass through what difficulties I may, through whatever dangers and afflictions, I am not a whit the nearer home, unless a dungeon may be called so. This is no very agreeable theme; but in so great a dearth of subjects to write upon, and especially impressed as I am at this moment with a sense of my own condition, I could choose no other. The weather is an exact emblem of my mind in its present state. A thick fog envelopes every thing, and at the same time it freezes intensely. You will tell me that this cold gloom will be succeeded by a cheerful spring, and endeavour to encourage me to hope for a spiritual change resembling it;—but it will be lost labour. Nature revives again; but a soul once slain lives no more. The hedge that has been apparently dead, is not so; it will burst into leaf and blossom at the appointed time; but no such time is appointed for the stake that stands in it. It is as dead as it seems, and will prove itself no dissembler. The latter end of next month will complete a period of eleven years in which I have spoken no other language. It is a long time for a man, whose eyes were once opened, to spend in darkness; long enough to make despair an inveterate habit; and such it is in me. My friends, I know, expect that I shall see yet again. They think it necessary to the existence of divine truth, that he who once had possession of it should never finally lose it. I admit the solidity of this reasoning in every case but my own. And why not in my own? For causes which to them it appears madness to allege, but which rest upon my mind with a weight of immoveable conviction. If I am recoverable, why am I thus? why crippled and made useless in the church, just at that time of life, when, my judgement and experience being matured, I might be most useful? why cashiered and turned out of service, till, according to the

course of nature, there is not life enough left in me to make amends for the years I have lost,—till there is no reasonable hope left that the fruit can ever pay the expense of the fallow? I forestall the answer:—God's ways are mysterious, and he giveth no account of his matters:—an answer that would serve my purpose as well as theirs that use it. There is a mystery in my destruction, and in time it shall be explained.

I am glad you have found so much hidden treasure; and Mrs. Unwin desires me to tell you that you did her no more than justice, in believing that she would rejoice in it. It is not easy to surmise the reason, why the reverend doctor, your predecessor, concealed it. Being a subject of a free government, and I suppose full of the divinity most in fashion, he could not fear lest his great riches should expose him to persecution. Nor can I suppose that he held it any disgrace for a dignitary of the church to be wealthy, at a time when churchmen in general spare no pains to become so. But the wisdom of some men has a droll sort of knavishness in it, much like that of a magpie, who hides what he finds with a deal of contrivance, merely for the pleasure of doing it.

Mrs. Unwin is tolerably well. She wishes me to add that she shall be obliged to Mrs. Newton, if, when an opportunity offers, she will give the worsted-merchant a jog. We congratulate you that Eliza does not grow worse, which I know you expected would be the case in the course of the winter. Present our love to her. Remember us to Sally Johnson, and assure yourself that we remain as warmly as ever.

Yours, W. C. AND M. U.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, Jan. 1784.

WHEN I first resolved to write an answer to your last, this evening, I had no thought of any thing more sublime than prose. But before I began, it occurred to me that perhaps you would not be displeased with an attempt to give a poetical translation of the lines you sent me. They are so beautiful, that I felt the temptation irresistible. At least, as the French say, it was *plus forte que moi;* and I accordingly complied. By this means I have lost an hour; and whether I shall be able to fill my sheets before supper, is as yet doubtful. But I will do my best.

For your remarks, I think them perfectly just. You have no reason to distrust your taste, or to submit the trial of it to me. You understand the use and the force of language as well as any man. You have quick feelings, and you are fond of poetry. How is it possible then that you should not be a judge of it? I venture to hazard only one alteration, which, as it appears to me, would amount to a little improvement. The seventh and eighth lines I think I should like better thus,—

Aspirante levi zephyro et redeunte serenâ
Anni temperie, fœcundo e cespite surgunt.

My reason is, that the word *cum* is repeated too soon. At least my ear does not like it; and when it can be done without injury to the sense, there seems to me to be an elegance in diversifying the expression, as much as possible, upon similar occasions. It discovers a command of phrase, and gives a more masterly air to the piece. If *extincta* stood unconnected with *telis*, I should prefer your word *micant* to the doctor's *vigent*. But the latter seems to stand more in direct opposition to that sort of extinction, which is effected by a shaft or arrow. In the day-time the stars may be said to die, and in the night to recover their strength. Perhaps the Doctor had in his eye that noble line of Gray,—"*Hyperion's march they spy, and glitt'ring shafts of war!*" But it is a beautiful composition. It is tender, touching, and elegant. It is not easy to do it justice in English.

Many thanks for the books, which, being most admirably packed, came safe. They will furnish us with many a winter evening's amusement. We are glad that you intend to be the carrier back.

We rejoice too that your cousin has remembered you in her will. The money she left to those who attended her hearse would have been better bestowed upon you; and by this time perhaps she thinks so. Alas! what an enquiry does that thought suggest, and how impossible to make it to any purpose! What are the employments of the departed spirit? and where does it subsist? Has it any cognizance of earthly things? Is it transported to an immeasureable distance; or is it still, though imperceptible to us, conversant with the same scene, and interested in what passes here? How little we know of a state to which we are all destined; and how does the

obscurity, that hangs over that undiscovered country, increase the anxiety we sometimes feel as we are journeying towards it! It is sufficient however for such as you, and a few more of my acquaintance, to know that in your separate state you will be happy. Provision is made for your reception, and you will have no cause to regret aught that you have left behind.—*Apropos de ça,*

I have written to Mr. Smith. My letter went this morning. How I love and honour that man! For many reasons I dare not tell him how much. But I hate the frigidity of the style, in which I am forced to address him. That line of Horace—*Dii tibi divitias dederunt artemque fruendi*"—was never half so applicable to the poet's friend, as to Mr. Smith. My bosom burns to immortalize him. But prudence says "Forbear!" and, though a poet, I pay respect to her injunctions.

I sincerely give you joy of the good you have unconsciously done by your example and conversation. That you seem to yourself not to deserve the acknowledgment your friend makes of it, is a proof that you do. Grace is blind to its own beauty; whereas such virtues as man may reach without it, are remarkable self-admirers. May you make such impressions upon many of your order! I know none that need them more.

You do not want my praises of your conduct towards Mr. ——. It is well for him however, and still better for yourself, that you are capable of such a part. It was said of some good man, (my memory does not serve me with his name,) "do him an ill turn and you make him your friend for ever." But it is Christianity only that forms such friends. I wish his father may be duly affected by this instance and proof of your superiority to those ideas of you which he has so unreasonably harboured. He is not in my favour now, nor will be upon any other terms.

I laughed at the comments you make on your own feelings, when the subject of them was a newspaper eulogium. But it was a laugh of pleasure and approbation: such indeed is the heart, and so is it made up. There are few that can do good, and keep their own secret, none perhaps without a struggle. Yourself, and your friend Smith, are no very common instances of the fortitude that is necessary in such a conflict. In former days, I have felt my heart beat, and every vein throb, upon such an occasion. *To publish* my own good deed was wrong.

I knew it to be so. But to conceal it seemed like a voluntary injury to myself. Sometimes I could, and sometimes I could not succeed. My occasions for such conflicts indeed were not very numerous.

Yours, W. C.

Thanks for the sturgeon.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Jan. 25, 1784.

THIS contention about East Indian patronage seems not unlikely to avenge upon us, by its consequences, the mischiefs we have done there. The matter in dispute is too precious to be relinquished by either party; and each is jealous of the influence the other would derive from the possession of it. In a country whose politics have so long rolled upon the wheels of corruption, an affair of such value must prove a weight in either scale absolutely destructive of the very idea of a balance. Every man has his sentiments upon this subject, and I have mine. Were I constituted umpire of this strife, with full powers to decide it, I would tie a talent of lead about the neck of this patronage, and plunge it into the depths of the sea. To speak less figuratively, I would abandon all territorial interest in a country to which we can have no right, and which we cannot govern with any security to the happiness of the inhabitants, or without the danger of incurring either perpetual broils, or the most insupportable tyranny at home:—that sort of tyranny, I mean, which flatters and tantalizes the subject with a show of freedom, and in reality allows him nothing more; bribing to the right and left, rich enough to afford the purchase of a thousand consciences, and consequently strong enough, if it happen to meet with an incorruptible one, to render all the efforts of that man, or of twenty such men, if they could be found, romantic, and of no effect. I am the king's most loyal subject, and most obedient humble servant. But by his majesty's leave, I must acknowledge I am not altogether convinced of the rectitude even of his own measures, or the simplicity of his views; and if I were satisfied that he himself is to be trusted, it is nevertheless palpable, that he cannot answer for his successors. At the same time he is my king, and I reverence him as such. I account his prerogative sacred and

shall never wish prosperity to a party that invades it, and that under the pretence of patriotism would annihilate all the consequence of a character essential to the very being of the constitution. For these reasons I am sorry that we have any dominion in the East,—that we have any such emoluments to contend about. Their immense value will probably prolong the dispute, and such struggles having been already made in the conduct of it, as have shaken our very foundations, it seems not unreasonable to suppose that still greater efforts and more fatal, are behind; and after all, the decision in favour of either side may be ruinous to the whole. In the mean time, that the Company themselves are but indifferently qualified for the kingship, is most deplorably evident. What shall I say therefore? I distrust the court, I suspect the patriots, I put the Company entirely aside, as having forfeited all claim to confidence in such a business, and see no remedy of course, but in the annihilation, if that could be accomplished, of the very existence of our authority in the East Indies.

Unwin has lost a cousin, and found a thousand pounds. She died worth sixty thousand; but left most of her fortune to poor relations, some of whom she has probably ruined by her kindness. Accept our best love to yourself and household. Mary Bell is dead and buried. The small-pox is in Dog Lane: no other news.

Yours, my dear friend, most truly, W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Feb. 1784.

I AM glad that you have finished a work, of which I well remember the beginning, and which I was sorry you thought it expedient to discontinue. Your reason for not proceeding was however such as I was obliged to acquiesce in, being suggested by a jealousy you felt, "lest your spirit should be betrayed into acrimony, in writing upon such a subject." I doubt not you have sufficiently guarded that point; and indeed, at the time I could not discover that you had failed in it. I have busied myself this morning in contriving a Greek title, and in seeking a motto. The motto you mention is certainly apposite. But I think it an objection, that it has been so much in use; almost every writer, that has claimed a liberty to think for himself

upon whatever subject, having chosen it. I therefore send you one, which I never saw in that shape yet, and which appears to me equally apt and proper. The Greek word, δεσμος, which signifies literally a shackle, may figuratively serve to express those chains which bigotry and prejudice cast upon the mind. It seems, therefore, to speak like a lawyer, no misnomer of your book, to call it,

Μισοδεσμος.

The following pleases me most of all the mottoes I have thought of. But with respect both to that and the title you will use your pleasure.

Querelis
Haud justis assurgis, et irrita jurgia jactas.
Æn. x. 94.

From the little I have seen, and the much I have heard of the manager of the Review you mention, I cannot feel even the smallest push of a desire to serve him in the capacity of poet. Indeed I dislike him so much, that, had I a drawer full of pieces fit for his purpose, I hardly think I should contribute to his collection. It is possible too, that I may live to be once more a publisher myself; in which case, I should be glad to find myself in possession of any such original pieces, as might decently make their appearance in a volume of my own. At present however I have nothing that would be of use to him; nor have I many opportunities of composing, Sunday being the only day in the week which we spend alone.

I am at this moment pinched for time, but was desirous of proving to you, with what alacrity my Greek and Latin memory are always ready to obey you, and therefore by the first post have to the best of my ability complied with your request.

Believe me, my dear friend,
Affectionately yours, W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Feb. 10, 1784.

THE morning is my writing time, and in the morning I have no spirits. So much the worse for my correspondents. Sleep, that refreshes my body, seems to cripple me in every other respect. As the evening approaches, I grow more alert, and when I am retiring to bed, am more fit for mental occupation than at any other time. So it fares with us whom they call *nervous*. By a strange inversion of the animal economy, we

are ready to sleep when we have most need to be awake, and go to bed just when we might sit up to some purpose. The watch is irregularly wound up, it goes in the night when it is not wanted, and in the day stands still. In many respects we have the advantage of our forefathers the Picts. We sleep in a whole skin and are not obliged to submit to the painful operation of puncturing ourselves from head to foot, in order that we may be decently dressed, and fit to appear abroad. But on the other hand, we have reason enough to envy them their tone of nerves, and that flow of spirits which effectually secured them from all uncomfortable impressions of a gloomy atmosphere, and from every shade of melancholy from every other cause. They understood, I suppose, the use of vulnerary herbs, having frequent occasion for some skill in surgery; but physicians, I presume they had none, having no need of any. Is it possible, that a creature like myself can be descended from such progenitors, in whom there appears not a single trace of family resemblance? What an alteration have a few ages made? They, without clothing, would defy the severest season; and I, with all the accommodations that art has since invented, am hardly secure even in the mildest. If the wind blows upon me when my pores are open, I catch cold. A cough is the consequence. I suppose if such a disorder could have seized a Pict, his friends would have concluded that a bone had stuck in his throat, and that he was in some danger of choking. They would perhaps have addressed themselves to the cure of his cough by thrusting their fingers into his gullet, which would only have exasperated the case. But they would never have thought of administering laudanum, my only remedy. For this difference however that has obtained between me and my ancestors, I am indebted to the luxurious practices, and enfeebling self-indulgence, of a long line of grandsires, who from generation to generation have been employed in deteriorating the breed, till at last the collected effects of all their follies have centred in my puny self,—a man indeed, but not in the image of those that went before me;—a man, who sighs and groans, who wears out life in dejection and oppression of spirits, and who never thinks of the aborigines of the country to which he belongs, without wishing that he had been born among them. The evil is without a remedy, unless the ages that *are passed could* be recalled, my whole pedigree

be permitted to live again, and being properly admonished to beware of enervating sloth and refinement, would preserve their hardiness of nature unimpaired, and transmit the desirable quality to their posterity. I once saw Adam in a dream. We sometimes say of a picture, that we doubt not its likeness to the original, though we never saw him; a judgement we have some reason to form, when the face is strongly charactered, and the features full of expression. So I think of my visionary Adam, and for a similar reason. His figure was awkward indeed in the extreme. It was evident that he had never been taught by a Frenchman to hold his head erect, or to turn out his toes; to dispose gracefully of his arms, or to simper without a meaning. But if Mr. Bacon was called upon to produce a statue of Hercules, he need not wish for a juster pattern. He stood like a rock; the size of his limbs, the prominence of his muscles, and the height of his stature, all conspired to bespeak him a creature whose strength had suffered no diminution; and who, being the first of his race, did not come into the world under a necessity of sustaining a load of infirmities, derived to him from the intemperance of others. He was as much stouter than a Pict, as I suppose a Pict to have been than I. Upon my hypothesis, therefore, there has been a gradual declension, in point of bodily vigour, from Adam down to me: at least if my dream were a just representation of that gentleman, and deserve the credit I cannot help giving it, such must have been the case. Yours my dear friend, W. C.

TO MR. JOHNSON.

SIR, Cambridge, Feb. 19, 1784.

If you have Albinus' "Complete System of the Blood Vessels," and his Anatomical Tables, beg you will send me a copy of each in sheets. As soon as I know the price, shall remit the money.

I am, Sir, &c. W^M. COWPER.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM BULL.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Feb. 22, 1784.

I congratulate you on the thaw; I suppose it is an universal blessing, and probably felt all over Europe. I myself am the better for it, who wanted nothing that might make the frost supportable; what reason therefore have they to rejoice, who,

being in want of all things, were exposed to its utmost rigour! The ice in my ink, however, is not yet dissolved. It was long before the frost seized it, but at last it prevailed. The Sofa has consequently received little or no addition since. It consists at present of four books and a part of a fifth; when the sixth is finished, the work is accomplished, but if I may judge by my present inability, that period is at a considerable distance.

I owe you thanks for your kind remembrance of me in your letter sent me on occasion of your departure, and as many for that which I received last night. I should have answered, had I known where a line or two from me might find you; but uncertain whether you were at home or abroad, my diligence, I confess, wanted the necessary spur.

It makes a capital figure among the comforts we enjoyed during the long severity of the season, that the same *incognito* to all except ourselves, made us his almoners this year likewise, as he did the last, and to the same amount. Some we have been enabled, I suppose, to save from perishing, and certainly many from the most pinching necessity.

Are you not afraid, Tory, as you are, to avow your principles to me, who am a Whig? Know that I am in the opposition; that though I pity the King, I do not wish him success in the present contest. But this is too long a battle to fight upon paper. Make haste, that we may decide it face to face.

Our respects wait upon Mrs. Bull, and our love upon the young Hebræan. I wish you joy of his proficiency, and am glad that you can say, with the old man in Terence,—

omnes omnia
Bona dicere, et laudare fortunas meas,
Qui gnatum haberem tali ingenio præditum.

Yours, W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, February, 1784.

I GIVE you joy of a thaw, that has put an end to a frost of nine weeks continuance with very little interruption; the longest that has happened since the year 1739. May I presume that you feel yourself indebted to me for intelligence, which perhaps no other of your correspondents will vouchsafe to communicate, though they are as well apprized of it, and as much convinced of the truth *of it, as myself?* It is, I suppose, every where

felt as a blessing, but no where more sensibly than at Olney; though even at Olney the severity of it has been alleviated in behalf of many. The same benefactor, who befriended them last year, has with equal liberality administered a supply to their necessities in the present. Like the subterraneous flue that warms my myrtles, he does good, and is unseen. His injunctions of secrecy are still as rigorous as ever, and must therefore be observed with the same attention. He, however, is a happy man, whose philanthropy is not like mine, an impotent principle, spending itself in fruitless wishes. At the same time, I confess it is a consolation, and I feel it an honour, to be employed as the conductor, and to be trusted as the dispenser of another man's bounty. Some have been saved from perishing, and all, that could partake of it, from the most pitiable distress.

I will not apologize for my politics, or suspect them of error, merely because they are taken up from the newspapers. I take it for granted, that those reporters of the wisdom of our representatives are tolerably correct and faithful. Were they not, and were they guilty of frequent and gross misrepresentation, assuredly they would be chastised by the rod of parliamentary criticism. Could I be present at the debates, I should indeed have a better opinion of my documents. But if the House of Commons be the best school of British politics, which I think an undeniable assertion, then he that reads what passes there has opportunities of information, inferior only to theirs who hear for themselves, and can be present upon the spot. Thus qualified, I take courage; and when a certain reverend neighbour of ours curls his nose at me, and holds my opinions cheap, merely because he has passed through London, in his way to Wiltshire, I am not altogether convinced that he has reason on his side. I do not know that the air of the metropolis has a power to brighten the intellects, or that to sleep a night in the great city is a necessary cause of wisdom. He tells me that Mr. Fox is a rascal, and that Lord North is a villain, that every creature execrates them both, and that I ought to do so too. But I beg to be excused. Villain and rascal are appellations which we, who do not converse with great men, are rather sparing in the use of. Neither can I persuade myself that because one of them has frequented the gaming table, *and the other*, after having been at the head of the court party,

has associated with him, they are therefore traitors to their country, and fit only to be hanged. I can conceive them both to be most entirely persuaded of the rectitude of their conduct; and the rather, because I feel myself much inclined to believe that, being so, they are not mistaken. I cannot think that secret influence is a bugbear, a phantom conjured up to serve a purpose; the mere *shibboleth* of a party. Stuartism, in my mind, has been the characteristic of the present reign; and being, and having always been somewhat of an enthusiast on the subject of British liberty, I am not able to withhold my reverence and good wishes from the man, whoever he be, that exerts himself in a constitutional way to oppose it. The son of Lord Chatham seems to me to have abandoned his father's principles. I admire neither his measures nor his temper; but very much admire the forbearance and lenity with which he is treated, and that consideration of his youth which men of equal ability, to say the least and certainly of much greater experience, vouchsafe to show him. His obstinate continuance in office, with no better reason for it than an imaginary point of honour, is without example. It is *like* a young man either intoxicated with power, or implicity, and at all hazards, executing the dictates of men more subtle and able than himself. I fear much that he is the tool of mischievous purposes, and that his unrelaxing steadiness, too much resembling that of a certain personage, will bring down a storm upon himself and upon the nation.

Caraccioli upon the subject of self-acquaintance was never, I believe, translated. I have sometimes thought that the Theological Miscellany might be glad of a chapter of it monthly. It is a work which I much admire. You, who are master of their plan, can tell me whether such a contribution would be welcome. If you think it would, I would be punctual in my remittances; and a labour of that sort would suit me better in my present state of mind than original composition on religious subjects.

Remember us as those that love you, and are never unmindful of you. Yours, my dear friend, W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Feb. 29, 1784.

We are glad that you have such a Lord Petre in your neigh-

bourhood. He must be a man of a liberal turn, to employ a heretic in such a service. I wish you a further acquaintance with him, not doubting that the more he knows you he will find you the more agreeable. You despair of becoming a prebendary for want of certain rhythmical talents, which you suppose me possessed of. But what think you of a cardinal's hat? Perhaps his lordship may have interest at Rome, and that greater honour may await you. Seriously, however, I respect his character, and should not be sorry if there were many such Papists in the land.

Mr. Smith has given free scope to his generosity, and contributed as largely to the relief of Olney, as he did last year. Soon after I had given you notice of his first remittance, we received a second to the same amount, accompanied indeed with an intimation that we were to consider it as an anticipated supply, which, but for the uncommon severity of the present winter, he should have reserved for the next. The inference is, that next winter we are to expect nothing. But the man and his beneficent turn of mind considered, there is some reason to suppose that, logical as the inference seems, it may yet be disappointed.

Adverting to your letter again, I perceive that you wish for my opinion of your answer to his lordship. Had I forgot to tell you that I approve of it, I know you well enough to be aware of the misinterpretation you would have put upon my silence. I am glad therefore that I happened to cast my eye upon your appeal to my opinion, before it was too late. A modest man, however able, has always some reason to distrust himself upon extraordinary occasions. Nothing is so apt to betray us into absurdity, as too great a dread of it; and the application of more strength than enough is sometimes as fatal as too little; but you have escaped very well, considering that you were addressing yourself to a lord, and that a lord is a creature you do not every day converse with. For my own part, when I write to a stranger, I feel myself deprived of half my intellects. I suspect that I shall write nonsense, and I do so. I tremble at the thought of an inaccuracy, and become absolutely ungrammatical. I feel myself sweat. I have recourse to the knife and the pounce. I correct half a dozen *blunders*, which in a common case I could not have committed, *and have* no sooner dispatched what I have written, than I re-

collect how much better I could have made it; how easily and genteelly I could have relaxed the stiffness of the phrase, and have cured the insufferable awkwardness of the whole, had they struck me a little earlier. Thus we stand in awe of we know not what, and miscarry through mere desire to excel.

I read Johnson's Prefaces every night, except when the newspaper calls me off. At a time like the present, what author can stand in competition with a newspaper? or who, that has a spark of patriotism, does not point all his attention to the present crisis? The consequences that I expect will follow our commotions are too terrible to be mentioned. They will proclaim *themselves* soon, if I have any skill in political speculation.

The sturgeon was excellent. W. C.

I am so disgusted with———, for allowing himself to be silent, when so loudly called upon to write to you, that I do not choose to express my feelings. Woe to the man whom kindness cannot soften!

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, March 8, 1784.

By this time I suppose the unhappy young man to whom you paid your charitable visit in Bridewell is on the point of removing from Newgate, where he has been sometime, to Maidstone, his place of trial. His parents, especially his mother, are, as may be supposed, in the deepest affliction, in which his aunt * * * * * is a sharer. She was with me this morning, charged with the fourth message of the kind, entreating me to intercede with Lord Dartmouth to intercede with the Judge, and to bespeak his favour; a wild application, dictated by distress and ignorance of the integrity with which justice is administered in this country. I believe I have convinced them of the impropriety and indeed of the impossibility of all such sinister anticipation, but have not been able to excuse myself from the task of recommending him to the intercession of Lord Dartmouth, should he be condemned, an event which seems to be certain. I have told them, (for I thought it would be cruel not to do so,) that I can give them no encouragement to expect that my interposition will do them any service; that there being no circumstance in the complexion of his case that seems *to single* him out from the common herd of

offenders, and to give colour to such a proceeding, I did no all suppose that his lordship would be willing to undert the office; or that if he should, the king would be entrea mercy not being such a matter of mere favour as not to determined in its operations by the peculiar and distingui ing features of the case. Thus stands the affair. I could decline a labour to which common humanity calls me, tho in consideration of the hopelessness of my errand, for his lo ship's sake as well as my own, I would gladly have done so

I thank you for the two first numbers of the Theolog Miscellany. I have not read them regularly through, but su ciently to observe that they are much indebted to Omicr An essay, signed Parvulus, pleased me likewise; and I shall glad if a neighbour of ours, to whom I have lent them, sho be able to apply to his own use the lesson it inculcates. further consideration I have seen reason to forego my purp of translating Caraccioli. Though I think no book more culated to teach the art of pious meditation, or to enforc conviction of the vanity of all pursuits that have not the so interests for their object, I can yet see a flaw in his manne instructing, that in a country so enlightened as ours wo escape nobody's notice. Not enjoying the advantages of ev gelical ordinances, and Christian communion, he falls int mistake natural in his situation; ascribing always the pleasu he found in a holy life to his own industrious perseverance i contemplative course, and not to the immediate agency of great Comforter of his people; and directing the eye of his read to a spiritual principle within, which he supposes to subsist in soul of every man, as the source of all divine enjoyment, not to Christ, as he would gladly have done, had he fallen un Christian teachers. Allowing for these defects, he is a cha ing writer, and by those who know how to make such all ances, may be read with great delight and improvement. with these defects in his manner, though, I believe, no n ever had a heart more devoted to God, he does not seem dres with sufficient exactness to be fit for the public eye, where n is known to be nothing, and Jesus all in all. He must the fore be dismissed as an unsuccessful candidate for a place this Miscellany, and will be less mortified at being rejected the first instance, than if he had met with a refusal from

publisher. I can only therefore repeat what I said before, that when I find a proper subject, and myself at liberty to pursue it, I will endeavour to contribute my quota. But alas! where spiritual communications are in question, the heart rather than the head is wanted. I could draw the picture of Despair at any time; I could delineate the country through which he travels, and describe his progress, could trace him from melancholy to rage, from rage to obduracy, and from obduracy to indifference about the event; and this I could do in prose or verse with the greatest facility, but to what good purpose? Like Cibber's mad figures upon Bedlam gate, the representation might be allowed to be just, but if it were admired would be so only in proportion as it shocked.

Last Tuesday evening we were alarmed by another fire. A barn adjoining to George Gee's malthouse was burnt to the ground; his building escaped, though a part of the thatch of it was consumed. The wind would have brought it our way had it blown at all, for it was in the east, but the weather was perfectly calm. There is no doubt of its having been kindled maliciously.

Mrs. Unwin is very sorry to be so troublesome on the old subject of worsted, but her whole stock is nearly exhausted. She is well, and joins in love with your faithful and affectionate,

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Olney, March 11, 1784.

I LITTLE thought when I made myself merry with our pretty, plausible candidate, that I was laughing at your expense. Had I suspected any such consequence, I should have postponed my joke to a more convenient opportunity. The newspaper having always come uncharged, I had reason to hope that the same grace and favour would have been vouchsafed to a letter of mine, and what was the cause of so partial a distinction, am at a loss to imagine.

I return you many thanks for your Apology, which I have read with great pleasure.[1] You know of old that your style always pleases me: and having in a former letter given you the

[1] The book alluded to is entitled "Apologia. Four Letters to a Minister of an Independent Church. By a Minister of the Church of England."

reasons for which I like it, I spare you now the pain of a repetition. The spirit, too, in which you write, pleases me as much. But I perceive that in some cases it is possible to be severe, and at the same time perfectly good-tempered; in all cases I suppose where we suffer by an injurious and unreasonable attack, and can justify our conduct by a plain and simple narrative. On such occasions, truth itself seems a satire, because by implication at least it convicts our adversaries of the want of charity and candour. For this reason perhaps you will find that you have made many angry, though you are not so; and it is possible that they may be the more angry upon that very account. To assert, and to prove, that an enlightened minister of the Gospel may, without any violation of his conscience, and even upon the ground of prudence and propriety continue in the establishment; and to do this with the most absolute composure, must be very provoking to the dignity of some dissenting doctors; and to nettle them still the more, you in a manner impose upon them the necessity of being silent, by declaring that you will be so yourself. Upon the whole however I have no doubt that your Apology will do good. If it should irritate some, who have more zeal than knowledge, and more of bigotry than of either, it may serve to enlarge the views of others, and to convince them, that there may be grace, truth, and efficacy, in the ministry of a church of which they are not members. I wish it success, and all that attention to which, both from the nature of the subject, and the manner in which you have treated it, it is so well entitled.

It is hardly possible for a man to interest himself less than I do in what passes in the political world. I have my own reasons for discharging myself of that burthen, and such reasons as I believe no man ever had but myself. Had I dropped from the moon into this system eleven years ago, the concerns of a world to which I did not naturally belong, would not have engaged me much; and just as little engaged I feel myself under a persuasion which nothing has yet shaken, that I am an extra-mundane character with reference to this globe of yours; and that, though not a native of the moon, I was not however made of the dust of this planet. Yet I confess that for the sake of amusement, and that I may forget as much as possible my terrible translation out of an England that gave me birth *into an England* that did not, I sometimes talk upon these

subjects, and to you have sometimes written upon them, as if they were indeed as important to me as they are to every man around me. Nor have I any objection to doing so at this moment. Know, then, that my reasons for thinking (in which thoughts I appear to you to be singular) that the present contest is between the Crown and the Commons are these: the Crown, no less than the India Company, quarrelled with Fox's India Bill: the Crown, for causes palpable enough, espoused the cause of Mr. Pitt's. The Crown interfered by a whispered message to nullify the former, and by upholding the new minister in his place, in opposition to a majority of the House, in hopes to give effect to the latter; but finding itself unable to carry this favourite point in a Parliament so unfriendly to its designs, the Crown dissolved it; expecting, and I fear with too good reason, that a new one will be more propitious. Thus in short hand I have accounted for my opinion; for as to what is said by many, of the King's personal dislike of Fox and Lord North, I put it pretty much out of the question; hoping, at least, that he is a more sensible King than to throw the whole business of his empire into a state of distraction, merely to gratify a pique against two individuals. The patronage of the East Indies will be a dangerous weapon in whatever hands; I had rather, however, see it lodged any where than with the Crown. In that event, I should say adieu for ever to every hope of an uncorrupt representation, and consequently to every hope of constitutional liberty for the subject. In one point, after all, we are agreed, we think favourably of neither party; and for my own particular, I can truly say, that I have no prospect of deliverance for this country, but the same that I have of a possibility that we may one day be disencumbered of our ruinous possessions in the East.

Our good neighbours, who have so successfully knocked away our Western crutch from under us, seem to design us the same favour on the opposite side; in which case we shall be poor, but I think we shall stand a better chance to be free: and I had rather drink water-gruel for breakfast, and be no man's slave, than wear a chain, and drink tea as usual.

We received the last parcel of worsted by Grace Stamford, and return Mrs. Newton many thanks. But little news is stirring. The election has made a great noise in the steeple, and some in the street; but at length we are quiet again. The

Squire of Weston assisted in canvassing the town for Lord Verney, and met with several affronts, but was especially insulted by wrong-headed Nathan Sample; who, it seems, has much the same aversion to a Papist that some people have to a cat; rather an antipathy than a reasonable dislike. Pentecross wrote a letter to Jones, in which he represented the cause of Pitt as the cause of God: but for want of *his* spectacles I could not clearly discern it to be so. Molly Clifton is dead and buried; the rest of us, I believe, are all alive and unburied. Mr. Scott had a political epistle of his printed in last Thursday's General Evening;—plain, I thought, and sensible.

I have just room to add, that we love you as usual, and are your affectionate William and Mary.

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, March 19, 1784.

I WISH it were in my power to give you any account of the Marquis Caraccioli. Some years since I saw a short history of him in the Review, of which I recollect no particulars, except that he was (and for aught I know may be still) an officer in the Prussian service. I have two volumes of his works, lent me by Lady Austen. One is upon the subject of self-acquaintance, and the other treats of the art of conversing with the same gentleman. Had I pursued my purpose of translating him, my design was to have furnished myself, if possible, with some authentic account of him, which I suppose may be procured at any bookseller's who deals in foreign publications. But for the reasons given in my last I have laid aside the design. There is something in his style that touches me exceedingly, and which I do not know how to describe. I should call it pathetic, if it were occasional only, and never occurred but when his subject happened to be particularly affecting. But it is universal; he has not a sentence that is not marked with it. Perhaps therefore I may describe it better by saying, that his whole work has an air of pious and tender melancholy, which to me at least is extremely agreeable. This property of it, which depends perhaps altogether upon the arrangement of his words, and the modulation of his sentences, it would be very difficult to preserve in a translation. I do not know that our language is capable of being so managed, and rather suspect that it is not, and that it is peculiar to the French, because

it is not unfrequent among their writers, and I never saw any thing similar to it in our own.

I converse, you say, upon other subjects, than that of despair, and may therefore write upon others. Indeed, my friend, I am a man of very little conversation upon any subject. From that of despair I abstain as much as possible, for the sake of my company; but I will venture to say that it is never out of my mind one minute in the whole day. I do not mean to say that I am never cheerful. I am often so; always, indeed, when my nights have been undisturbed for a season. But the effect of such continual listening to the language of a heart hopeless and deserted, is, that I can never give much more than half my attention to what is started by others, and very rarely start any thing myself. My silence, however, and my absence of mind, make me sometimes as entertaining as if I had wit. They furnish an occasion for friendly and good-natured raillery; they raise a laugh, and I partake of it. But you will easily perceive that a mind thus occupied is but indifferently qualified for the consideration of theological matters. The most useful and the most delightful topics of that kind are to me forbidden fruit;—I tremble if I approach them. It has happened to me sometimes that I have found myself imperceptibly drawn in, and made a party in such discourse. The consequence has been, dissatisfaction and self-reproach. You will tell me, perhaps, that I have written upon these subjects in verse, and may, therefore, if I please, in prose. But there is a difference. The search after poetical expression, the rhyme, and the numbers, are all affairs of some difficulty; they amuse, indeed, but are not to be attained without study, and engross, perhaps, a larger share of the attention than the subject itself. Persons fond of music will sometimes find pleasure in the tune, when the words afford them none. There are, however, subjects that do not always terrify me by their importance; such, I mean, as relate to Christian life and manners; and when such an one presents itself, and finds me in a frame of mind that does not absolutely forbid the employment, I shall most readily give it my attention, for the sake, however, of your request merely. Verse is my favourite occupation, and what I compose in that way, I reserve for my own use hereafter.

My evenings are devoted to books. I read aloud for the en-

tertainment of the party, thus making amends by a vociferation of two hours for my silence at other times.

I have lately finished eight volumes of Johnson's Prefaces, or Lives of the Poets. In all that number I observe but one man,—a poet of no great fame,—of whom I did not know that he existed till I found him there, whose mind seems to have had the slightest tincture of religion; and he was hardly in his senses. His name was Collins. He sunk into a state of melancholy, and died young. Not long before his death, he was found at his lodgings in Islington by his biographer, with the New Testament in his hand. He said to Johnson, "I have but one book, but it is the best." Of him, therefore, there are some hopes. But from the lives of all the rest there is but one inference to be drawn:—that poets are a very worthless, wicked set of people.

Mrs. Unwin sends her love; she is much obliged to Mrs. Newton for the care she has taken about the worsted. She had no suspicion that Mrs. Newton had forgot it, but supposed her correspondent might. We are in good health, and waiting as patiently as we can for the end of this second winter. The news is—that the brother of farmer Rush, a very sober young man, was driving his waggon last week to Bedford, and in the way ordered his man forward with the team, saying he would follow him, but he has never been heard of since.

Yours, my dear friends, truly, WM. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, March 21, 1784.

I THANK you for the entertainment you have afforded me. I often wish for a library, often regret my folly in selling a good collection; but I have one in Essex. It is rather remote, indeed, too distant for occasional reference; but it serves the purpose of amusement, and a waggon being a very suitable vehicle for an author, I find myself commodiously supplied. Last night I made an end of reading Johnson's Prefaces; but the number of poets whom he has vouchsafed to chronicle being fifty-six, there must be many with whose history I am not yet acquainted. These, or some of these, if it suits you to give them a part of your chaise, when you come, will be heartily welcome. I am very much the biographer's humble admirer. His uncommon share of good sense, and his forcible

expression, secure to him that tribute from all his readers. He has a penetrating insight into character, and a happy talent of correcting the popular opinion, upon all occasions where it is erroneous; and this he does with the boldness of a man who will think for himself, but, at the same time, with a justness of sentiment that convinces us he does not differ from others through affectation, but because he has a sounder judgement. This remark, however, has his narrative for its object, rather than his critical performance. In the latter, I do not think him always just, when he departs from the general opinion. He finds no beauties in Milton's Lycidas. He pours contempt upon Prior, to such a degree, that were he really as undeserving of notice as he represents him, he ought no longer to be numbered among the poets. These, indeed, are the two capital instances in which he has offended me. There are others less important, which I have not room to enumerate, and in which I am less confident that he is wrong. What suggested to him the thought that the Alma was written in imitation of Hudibras, I cannot conceive. In former years, they were both favourites of mine, and I often read them; but never saw in them the least resemblance to each other; nor do I now, except that they are composed in verse of the same measure. After all, it is a melancholy observation, which it is impossible not to make, after having run through this series of poetical lives, that where there were such shining talents, there should be so little virtue. These luminaries of our country seem to have been kindled into a brighter blaze than others, only that their spots might be more noticed! So much can nature do for our intellectual part, and so little for our moral. What vanity, what petulance in Pope! How painfully sensible of censure, and yet how restless in provocation! To what mean artifices could Addison stoop, in hopes of injuring the reputation of his friend! Savage, how sordidly vicious, and the more condemned for the pains that are taken to palliate his vices. Offensive as they appear through a veil, how would they disgust without one. What a sycophant to the public taste was Dryden; sinning against his feelings, lewd in his writings, though chaste in his conversation. I know not but one might search these eight volumes with a candle, as the prophet says, to find a man, and not find one, unless, perhaps, *Arbuthnot were he.*

I shall begin Beattie this evening, and propose to myself much satisfaction in reading him. In him, at least, I shall find a man whose faculties have now and then a glimpse from Heaven upon them ;—a man, not indeed in possession of much evangelical light, but faithful to what he has, and never neglecting an opportunity to use it. How much more respectable such a character, than that of thousands who would call him blind, and yet have not the grace to practise half his virtues! He, too, is a poet, and wrote the Minstrel. The specimens which I have seen of it pleased me much. If you have the whole, I should be glad to read it. I may, perhaps, since you allow me the liberty, indulge myself here and there with a marginal annotation, but shall not use that allowance wantonly, so as to deface the volumes.

Your mother wishes you to buy for her ten yards and a half of yard-wide Irish, from two shillings to two shillings and sixpence per yard ; and my head will be equally obliged to you for a hat, of which I enclose a string that gives you the circumference. The depth of the crown must be four inches and one-eighth. Let it not be a round slouch, which I abhor, but a smart well-cocked fashionable affair. A fashionable hat likewise for your mother ; a black one if they are worn, otherwise chip. Yours, my dear William, W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, March 29, 1784.

It being his majesty's pleasure that I should yet have another opportunity to write before he dissolves the parliament, I avail myself of it with all possible alacrity. I thank you for your last, which was not the less welcome for coming, like an extraordinary gazette, at a time when it was not expected.

As when the sea is uncommonly agitated, the water finds its way into creeks and holes of rocks, which in its calmer state it never reaches, in like manner the effect of these turbulent times is felt even at Orchard side, where in general we live as undisturbed by the political element, as shrimps or cockles that have been accidentally deposited in some hollow beyond the water mark, by the usual dashing of the waves. We were sitting yesterday after dinner, the two ladies and myself, very *composedly,* and without the least apprehension of any such

intrusion in our snug parlour, one lady knitting, the other netting, and the gentleman winding worsted, when to our unspeakable surprise a mob appeared before the window; a smart rap was heard at the door, the boys halloo'd, and the maid announced Mr. Grenville. Puss[1] was unfortunately let out of her box, so that the candidate, with all his good friends at his heels, was refused admittance at the grand entry, and referred to the back door, as the only possible way of approach.

Candidates are creatures not very susceptible of affronts, and would rather, I suppose, climb in at a window, than be absolutely excluded. In a minute, the yard, the kitchen, and the parlour, were filled. Mr. Grenville, advancing toward me, shook me by the hand with a degree of cordiality that was extremely seducing. As soon as he and as many more as could find chairs were seated, he began to open the intent of his visit. I told him I had no vote, for which he readily gave me credit. I assured him I had no influence, which he was not equally inclined to believe, and the less, no doubt, because Mr. Ashburner, the draper, addressing himself to me at this moment, informed me that I had a great deal. Supposing that I could not be possessed of such a treasure without knowing it, I ventured to confirm my first assertion, by saying, that if I had any I was utterly at a loss to imagine where it could be, or wherein it consisted. Thus ended the conference. Mr. Grenville squeezed me by the hand again, kissed the ladies, and withdrew. He kissed likewise the maid in the kitchen, and seemed upon the whole a most loving, kissing, kind-hearted gentleman. He is very young, genteel, and handsome. He has a pair of very good eyes in his head, which not being sufficient as it should seem for the many nice and difficult purposes of a senator, he has a third also, which he wore suspended by a ribband from his buttonhole. The boys halloo'd, the dogs barked, Puss scampered, the hero, with his long train of obsequious followers, withdrew. We made ourselves very merry with the adventure, and in a short time settled into our former tranquillity, never probably to be thus interrupted more. I thought myself, however, happy in being able to affirm truly that I had not that influence for which he sued; and which, had I been possessed of it, with my present views of the dis-

[1] *His tame hare.*

pute between the Crown and the Commons, I must have r fused him, for he is on the side of the former. It is comfor able to be of no consequence in a world where one cann exercise any without disobliging somebody. The town, hov ever, seems to be much at his service, and if he be equall successful throughout the county, he will undoubtedly gai his election. Mr. Ashburner perhaps was a little mortifie because it was evident that I owed the honour of this visit t his misrepresentation of my importance. But had he thougl proper to assure Mr. Grenville that I had three heads, I shoul not I suppose have been bound to produce them.

Mr. Scott, who you say was so much admired in your pulpi would be equally admired in his own, at least by all capabl judges, were he not so apt to be angry with his congregatior This hurts him, and had he the understanding and eloquenc of Paul himself, would still hurt him. He seldom, hardly eve indeed, preaches a gentle, well-tempered sermon, but I hea it highly commended: but warmth of temper, indulged to degree that may be called scolding, defeats the end of preacl ing. It is a misapplication of his powers, which it also cri ples, and teases away his hearers. But he is a good man, an may perhaps outgrow it.

Many thanks for the worsted, which is excellent. We ar as well as a spring hardly less severe than the severest winte will give us leave to be. With our united love, we conclud ourselves yours and Mrs. Newton's affectionate and faithful

W. C.
M. U.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, April, 1784.

HAVING been obliged by the account given of Corporal Eas in your last, to form a less favourable opinion of his pretension to the Christian character than his apparent modesty an spirituality had filled me with, I am not sorry to have had a opportunity to speak my mind to him. After the arrival c your letter I likewise saw Mr. Bull, who related to me wha had passed between him and a certain other soldier, on th subject of that man's character and conduct. The regimen *being disembodied*, he paid me a second visit last Thursda *morning, in* his way to London, where, he said, he expected t

find work, [illegible] it it in vain at Northampton. I saw him coming, and being at first very unwilling to enter upon the business of criminati m, sent him word that we were engaged. This was true, for we were just sitting down to breakfast, at which time one generally finds a mere spectator inconvenient. I meant that he should walk off, but he did not choose to understand me. After breakfast, therefore, I ordered him into the parlour. In the first place, I told him he had misinformed us when he said that you had sent him, you being yourself the witness; he was unwilling to confess a direct falsehood, and therefore replied, that he was much mistaken if you had not. I rejoined, You certainly then are much mistaken. I next addressed him with a long detail of the particular crimes with which his fellow-soldier and common report had charged him. But here again he found it convenient to have a bad memory. He could not recollect that he had ever been guilty of swearing, since he made a profession; or of gaming, except that once he threw a dice for a mutton pie; or of drunkenness more than once, since he became a militia man. The best advice I could give him was to confront his accuser in the presence of Mr. Bull, before whom he had lodged his accusation: but he said the man was gone into Bedfordshire, and where to find him he knew not. Thus we parted,—he disappointed, that instead of money, which I dare say he came for, he had met with a reproof; and I glad to be rid of him in a way which pretty well secures me from the danger of seeing him again. He did not weep, but he trembled so that his knees would hardly support him. I have heard worse of him since, and worse than I am willing to believe, notwithstanding my present thoughts of him.

People that are but little acquainted with the terrors of divine wrath, are not much afraid of trifling with their Maker. But for my own part I would sooner take Empedocles's leap, and fling myself into Mount Ætna, than I would do it in the slightest instance, were I in circumstances to make an election. In the Scripture we find a broad and clear exhibition of mercy; it is displayed in every page. Wrath is in comparison but slightly touched upon, because it is not so much a discovery of wrath as of forgiveness. But had the displeasure of God been the principal subject of the book, and had it circumstantially set *forth that measure of it* only which may be endured

even in this life, the Christian world perhaps would have been less comfortable; but I believe presumptuous meddlers with the Gospel would have been less frequently met with. The word is a flaming sword; and he that touches it with unhallowed fingers, thinking to make a tool of it, will find that he has burnt them.

What havoc in Calabria! every house is built upon the sand, whose inhabitants have no God, or only a false one. Solid and fluid are such in respect to each other: but with reference to the divine power they are equally fixed, or equally unstable. The inhabitants of a rock shall sink, while a cockboat shall save a man alive in the midst of the fathomless ocean. The Pope grants dispensations for folly and madness during the carnival. But it seems they are as offensive to Him, whose vicegerent he pretends himself, at that season as at any other. Were I a Calabrian, I would not give my papa at Rome one farthing for his amplest indulgence, for this time forth for ever. There is a word that makes this world tremble; and the Pope cannot countermand it. A fig for such a conjuror! Pharaoh's conjurors had twice his ability.

Our thanks are due for a pair of fine soles and a lobster, and we sincerely pay them. Give our love to Mrs. Newton, and accept it yourself.

Believe me, my dear friend,

Affectionately yours, W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, April, 5, 1784.

THE hat which I desired you to procure for me, I now write to desire that you will not procure. Do not hastily infer that I mean to go about bareheaded: the whole of the matter is, that a readier method of supply has presented itself since I wrote.

I thanked you in my last for Johnson; I now thank you, with more emphasis, for Beattie, the most agreeable and amiable writer I ever met with; the only author I have seen whose critical and philosophical researches are diversified and embellished by a poetical imagination, that makes even the driest subject, and the leanest, a feast for an epicure in books. He is so much at his ease too, that his own character appears in every page, and which is very rare, we see not only the writer

but the man: and that man so gentle, so well-tempered, so happy in his religion, and so humane in his philosophy, that it is necessary to love him, if one has the least sense of what is lovely. If you have not his poem called the Minstrel, and cannot borrow it, I must beg you to buy it for me; for though I cannot afford to deal largely in so expensive a commodity as books, I must afford to purchase at least the poetical works of Beattie.

I have read six of Blair's Lectures, and what do I say of Blair? That he is a sensible man, master of his subject, and excepting here and there a Scotticism, a good writer, so far at least as perspicuity of expression, and method, contribute to make one. But oh the sterility of that man's fancy! if indeed he has any such faculty belonging to him. Perhaps philosophers, or men designed for such, are sometimes born without one; or perhaps it withers for want of exercise. However that may be, Doctor Blair has such a brain as Shakespeare somewhere describes as "dry as the remainder biscuit after a voyage."

I take it for granted that these good men are philosophically correct (for they are both agreed upon the subject) in their account of the origin of language; and if the Scripture had left us in the dark upon that article, I should very readily adopt their hypothesis for want of better information. I should suppose, for instance, that man made his first effort in speech in the way of an interjection, and that ah, or oh, being uttered with wonderful gesticulation, and variety of attitude, must have left his powers of expression quite exhausted: that in a course of time he would invent names for many things, but first for the objects of his daily wants. An apple would consequently be called an apple, and perhaps not many years would elapse before the appellation would receive the sanction of general use. In this case, and upon this supposition, seeing one in the hand of another man, he would exclaim with a most moving pathos, "Oh apple!"—Well and good—oh apple! is a very affecting speech, but in the mean time it profits him nothing. The man that holds it, eats it, and *he* goes away with "oh apple" in his mouth, and with nothing better. Reflecting upon his disappointment, and that perhaps it arose from his not being more explicit, he contrives a term to denote his idea of *transfer or gratuitous* communication, and the next oc-

casion that offers of a similar kind, performs his part accordingly. His speech now stands thus, "Oh give apple!" The apple-holder perceives himself called upon to part with his fruit, and, having satified his own hunger, is perhaps not unwilling to do so. But unfortunately there is still room for a mistake, and a third person being present, he gives the apple to *him*. Again disappointed, and again perceiving that his language has not all the precision that is requisite, the orator retires to his study, and there, after much deep thinking, conceives that the insertion of a pronoun, whose office shall be to signify that he not only wants the apple to be given, but given to himself, will remedy all defects, he uses it the next opportunity, and succeeds to a wonder, obtains the apple, and by his success such credit to his invention, that pronouns continue to be in great repute ever after.

Now as my two syllablemongers, Beattie and Blair, both agree that language was originally inspired, and that the great variety of languages we find upon earth at present took its rise from the confusion of tongues at Babel, I am not perfectly convinced that there is any just occasion to invent this very ingenious solution of a difficulty, which Scripture has solved already. My opinion however is, if I may presume to have an opinion of my own, so different from those who are so much wiser than myself, that if man had been his own teacher, and had acquired his words and his phrases only as necessity or convenience had prompted, his progress must have been considerably slower than it was, and in Homer's days the production of such a poem as the Iliad impossible. On the contrary, I doubt not that Adam on the very day of his creation was able to express himself in terms both forcible and elegant, and that he was at no loss for sublime diction, and logical combination, when he wanted to praise his Maker.

Yours, my dear friend, W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, April 25, 1784.

I WISH I had both burning words, and bright thoughts, but have at present neither. My head is not itself. Having had an unpleasant night, and a melancholy day, and having already *written a long* letter, I do not find myself in point of spirits at *all qualified* either to burn or shine. The post sets out early on

Tuesday. The morning is the only time of exercise with me. In order therefore to keep it open for that purpose, and to comply with your desire of an immediate answer, I give to you as much as I can spare of the present evening. I have also been ill with a rheumatism in my back, which though in a great measure removed, has left an aching sensation behind it, which my present occupation makes me feel more sensibly. Do not imagine that I have a design to enhance the merit of my punctuality by an enumeration of the difficulties under which I observe it. I mean no more than an apology for sending you a sheet, which, when it arrives, you will not find it worthy of your perusal.

Since I despatched my last, Blair has crept a little further into my favour. As his subjects improve, he improves with them; but upon the whole I account him a dry writer, useful no doubt as an instructor, but as little entertaining as with so much knowledge it is possible to be. His language is, (except Swift's,) the least figurative I remember to have seen, and the few figures found in it are not always happily employed. I take him to be a critic very little animated by what he reads, who rather reasons about the beauties of an author, than really tastes them; and who finds that a passage is praiseworthy, not because it charms him, but because it is accommodated to the laws of criticism in that case made and provided. I have a little complied with your desire of marginal annotations, and should have dealt in them more largely, had I read the books to myself; but being reader to the ladies, I have not always time to settle my own opinion of a doubtful expression, much less to suggest an emendation. I have not censured a particular observation in the book, though when I met with it, it displeased me. I this moment recollect it, and may as well therefore note it here. He is commending, and deservedly, that most noble description of a thunder-storm in the first Georgic, which ends with

Ingeminant austri, et densissimus imber.

Being in haste, I do not refer to the volume for his very words, but my memory will serve me with the matter. When poets describe, he says, they should always select such circumstances of the subject as are least obvious, and consequently most striking. He therefore admires the effect of the thunderbolt

splitting mountains, and filling a nation with astonishment, but quarrels with the closing member of the period, as containing particulars of a storm not worthy of Virgil's notice, because obvious to the notice of all. But here I differ from him; not being able to conceive that wind and rain can be improper in the description of a tempest, or how wind and rain could possibly be more poetically described. Virgil is indeed remarkable for finishing his periods well, and never comes to a stop but with the most consummate dignity of numbers and expression; and in the instance in question I think his skill in this respect is remarkably displayed. The line is perfectly majestic in its march. As to the wind, it is such as only the word *ingeminant* could describe; and the words *densissimus imber* give one an idea of a shower indeed, but of such a shower as is not very common, and such a one as only Virgil could have done justice to by a single epithet. Far therefore from agreeing with the Doctor in his stricture, I do not think the Æneid contains a nobler line, or a description more magnificently finished.

We are glad that Dr. Conyers has singled you out upon this occasion. Your performance we doubt not will justify his choice: fear not,—you have a heart that can feel upon charitable occasions, and that therefore will not fail you upon this. The burning words come always fast enough, when the sensibility is such as yours.

Thanks for the fish, with its companion a lobster, which we mean to eat to-morrow. We want four Chinese tooth-brushes, they cost a shilling each, the harder the better. Thanks also for the hat, which is greatly admired, and for the Minstrel, which I dare say I shall admire no less. Beattie is become my favourite author of all the moderns; he is so amiable, I long to know him.

Yours, my dear friend, W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, April 26, 1784.

We are truly sorry that you have been indisposed. It is well however to have passed through such a season and to have fared no worse. A cold and a sore-throat are troublesome things, but in general an ague is more troublesome; and in this part of the world few have escaped one. I have lately

been an invalid myself, and have just recovered from a rheumatic pain in my back, the most excruciating of the sort I ever felt. There was talk of bleeding and blistering, but I escaped with only an embrocation and a box of pills. Mr. Grindon attended me, who, though he fidgets about the world as usual, is, I think, a dying man, having had some time since a stroke of apoplexy, and lately a paralytic one. His loss will be felt in this country. Though I do not think him absolutely an Æsculapius, I believe him to be as skilful as most of his fraternity in the neighbourhood, besides which, he has the merit of being extremely cautious, a very necessary quality in a practitioner upon the constitutions of others.

We are glad that your book runs. It will not indeed satisfy those whom nothing could satisfy but your accession to their party; but the liberal will say you do well, and it is in the opinion of such men only that you can feel yourself interested.

I have lately been employed in reading Beattie and Blair's Lectures. The latter I have not yet finished, I find the former the most agreeable of the two, indeed the most entertaining writer upon dry subjects that I ever met with. His imagination is highly poetical, his language easy and elegant, and his manner so familiar that we seem to be conversing with an old friend, upon terms of the most sociable intercourse, while we read him. Blair is on the contrary rather stiff, not that his style is pedantic, but his air is formal. He is a sensible man, and understands his subjects, but too conscious that he is addressing the public, and too solicitous about his success, to indulge himself for a moment in that play of fancy which makes the other so agreeable. In Blair we find a scholar, in Beattie both a scholar and an amiable man; indeed so amiable, that I have wished for his acquaintance ever since I read his book. Having never in my life perused a page of Aristotle, I am glad to have had an opportunity of learning more than (I suppose) he would have taught me, from the writings of two modern critics. I felt myself too a little disposed to compliment my own acumen upon the occasion. For though the art of writing and composing was never much my study, I did not find that they had any great news to tell me. They have assisted me in putting my own observations into some method, but have not suggested many, of which I was not by some means or other previously apprized. In fact, critics did not originally beget

authors; but authors made critics. Common sense dictated to writers the necessity of method, connexion, and thoughts congruous to the nature of their subject; genius prompted them with embellishments, and then came the critics. Observing the good effects of an attention to these items, they enacted laws for the observance of them in time to come, and having drawn their rules for good writing from what was actually well written, boasted themselves the inventors of an art which yet the authors of the day had already exemplified. They are however useful in their way, giving us at one view a map of the boundaries which propriety sets to fancy; and serving as judges, to whom the public may at once appeal, when pestered with the vagaries of those who have had the hardiness to transgress them.

The candidates for this county have set an example of economy, which other candidates would do well to follow, having come to an agreement on both sides to defray the expenses of their voters, but to open no houses for the entertainment of the rabble; a reform however which the rabble did not at all approve of, and testified their dislike of it by a riot. A stage was built, from which the orators had designed to harangue the electors. This became the first victim of their fury. Having very little curiosity to hear what gentlemen could say who would give them nothing better than words, they broke it in pieces, and threw the fragments upon the hustings. The sheriff, the members, the lawyers, the voters, were instantly put to flight. They rallied, but were again routed by a second assault, like the former. They then proceeded to break the windows of the inn to which they had fled; and a fear prevailing that at night they would fire the town, a proposal was made by the freeholders to face about and endeavour to secure them. At that instant a rioter, dressed in a merry andrew's jacket, stepped forward, and challenged the best man among them. Olney sent the hero to the field, who made him repent of his presumption. Mr. Ashburner was he. Seizing him by the throat, he shook him,—he threw him to the earth, he made the hollowness of his skull resound by the application of his fists, and dragged him into custody without the least damage to his person. Animated by this example, the other freeholders followed it: and in five minutes

twenty-eight out of thirty ragamuffins were safely lodged in gaol.

Adieu, my dear friend; writing makes my back ache, and my paper is full.

We love you, and are yours, W. AND M.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND, May 3, 1784.

THE subject of face-painting may be considered (I think) in two points of view. First, there is room for dispute with respect to the consistency of the practice with good morals; and secondly, whether it be on the whole convenient or not, may be a matter worthy of agitation. I set out with all the formality of logical disquisition, but do not promise to observe the same regularity any further than it may comport with my purpose of writing as fast as I can.

As to the immorality of the custom, were I in France, I should see none. On the contrary, it seems in that country to be a symptom of modest consciousness, and a tacit confession of what all know to be true, that French faces have in fact neither red nor white of their own. This humble acknowledgement of a defect, looks the more like a virtue, being found among a people not remarkable for humility. Again, before we can prove the practice to be immoral, we must prove immorality in the design of those who use it; either that they intend a deception, or to kindle unlawful desires in the beholders. But the French ladies, so far as their purpose comes in question, must be acquitted of both these charges. Nobody supposes their colour to be natural for a moment, any more than he would if it were blue or green: and this unambiguous judgement of the matter is owing to two causes: first, to the universal knowledge we have, that French women are naturally either brown or yellow, with very few exceptions, and secondly, to the inartificial manner in which they paint: for they do not, as I am most satisfactorily informed, even attempt an imitation of nature, but besmear themselves hastily, and at a venture, anxious only to lay on enough. Where therefore there is no wanton intention, nor a wish to deceive, I can discover no immorality. But in England, (I am afraid,) our painted ladies are not clearly entitled to the same apology. They even imitate nature with such exactness, that the whole public is

sometimes divided into parties, who litigate with great warmth the question, whether painted or not? this was remarkably the case with a Miss B——, whom I well remember. Her roses and lilies were never discovered to be spurious, till she attained an age, that made the supposition of their being natural impossible. This anxiety to be not merely red and white, which is all they aim at in France, but to be thought very beautiful, and much more beautiful than nature has made them, is a symptom not very favourable to the idea we would wish to entertain of the chastity, purity, and modesty of our country-women. That they are guilty of a design to deceive, is certain. Otherwise why so much art? and if to deceive, wherefore and with what purpose? Certainly either to gratify vanity of the silliest kind, or, which is still more criminal, to decoy and inveigle, and carry on more successfully the business of temptation. Here therefore my opinion splits itself into two opposite sides upon the same question. I can suppose a French woman, though painted an inch deep, to be a virtuous, discreet, excellent character; and in no instance should I think the worse of one because she was painted. But an English belle must pardon me, if I have not the same charity for her. She is at least an impostor, whether she cheats me or not, because she means to do so; and it is well if that be all the censure she deserves.

This brings me to my second class of ideas upon this topic: and here I feel that I should be fearfully puzzled, were I called upon to recommend the practice on the score of convenience. If a husband chose that his wife should paint, perhaps it might be her duty, as well as her interest, to comply. But I think he would not much consult his own, for reasons that will follow. In the first place, she would admire herself the more; and in the next, if she managed the matter well, she might be more admired by others; an acquisition that might bring her virtue under trials, to which otherwise it might never have been exposed. In no other case however can I imagine the practice in this country to be either expedient, or convenient. As a general one, it certainly is not expedient, because in general English women have no occasion for it. A swarthy complexion is a rarity here; and the sex, especially since inoculation has been so much in use, have very little cause to complain that nature has not been kind to them in the article of com-

plexion. They may hide and spoil a good one; but they cannot, (at least they hardly can,) give themselves a better. But even if they could, there is yet a tragedy in the sequel, which should make them tremble. I understand that in France, though the use of rouge be general, the use of white paint is far from being so. In England, she that uses one, commonly uses both. Now all white paints, or lotions, or whatever they may be called, are mercurial, consequently poisonous, consequently ruinous in time to the constitution. The Miss B—— above mentioned was a miserable witness of this truth, it being certain that her flesh fell from her bones before she died. Lady Coventry was hardly a less melancholy proof of it; and a London physician perhaps, were he at liberty to blab, could publish a bill of female mortality, of a length that would astonish us.

For these reasons, I utterly condemn the practice, as it obtains in England: and for a reason superior to all these, I must disapprove it. I cannot indeed discover that Scripture forbids it in so many words. But that anxious solicitude about the person, which such an artifice evidently betrays, is I am sure contrary to the tenor and spirit of it throughout. Show me a woman with a painted face, and I will show you a woman whose heart is set on things of the earth, and not on things above. But this observation of mine applies to it only when it is an imitative art. For in the use of French women, I think it as innocent as in the use of a wild Indian, who draws a circle round her face, and makes two spots, perhaps blue, perhaps white, in the middle of it. Such are my thoughts upon the matter. *Vive valeque,*

Yours ever, W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, May 8, 1784.

WHEN our correspondents send us money, I always hold them entitled to an immediate answer; accordingly, though since the arrival of yours, I have only had time to run through the newspaper, I am now with pen in hand, upon the point of informing you that your letter, together with its contents, is at this moment safe at Olney.

You do well to make your letters merry ones, though not very merry yourself, and that both for my sake and your own;

for your own sake, because it sometimes happens, that by assuming an air of cheerfulness we become cheerful in reality; and for mine, because I have always more need of a laugh than a cry, being somewhat disposed to melancholy by natural temperament, as well as by other causes.

It was long since, and even in the infancy of John Gilpin, recommended to me by a lady now at Bristol, to write a sequel. But having always observed that authors, elated with the success of a first part, have fallen below themselves when they have attempted a second, I had more prudence than to take her counsel. I want you to read the history of that hero, published by Bladon, and to tell me what it is made of. But buy it not; for, puffed as it is in the papers, it can be but a bookseller's job, and must be dear at the price of two shillings. In the last pacquet but one that I received from Johnson, he asked me if I had any improvements of John Gilpin in hand, or if I designed any; for that to print only the original again would be to publish what has been hacknied in every magazine, in every newspaper, and in every street. I answered, that the copy which I sent him contained two or three small variations from the first, except which I had none to propose, and that if he thought him now too trite, to make a part of my volume, I should willingly acquiesce in his judgement. I take it for granted therefore that he will not bring up the rear of my Poems according to my first intention, and shall not be sorry for the omission. It may spring from a principle of pride; but spring it from what it may, I feel, and have long felt, a disinclination to a public avowal that he is mine; and since he became so popular, I have felt it more than ever; not that I should have expressed a scruple, if Johnson had not. But a fear has suggested itself to me, that I might expose myself to a charge of vanity by admitting him into my book, and that some people would impute it to me as a crime. Consider what the world is made of, and you will not find my suspicions chimerical. Add to this, that when, on correcting the latter part of the fifth book of the Task, I came to consider the solemnity and sacred nature of the subjects there handled, it seemed to me an incongruity at the least, not to call it by a harsher name, to follow up such premises with such a conclusion. I am well *content therefore* with having laughed, and made others laugh,

and will build my hopes of success, as a poet, upon more important matter.

In our printing business we now jog on merrily enough. The coming week will I hope bring me to an end of the Task, and the next fortnight to an end of the whole. I am glad to have Paley on my side in the affair of education. He is certainly on all subjects a sensible man, and on such, a wise one. But I am mistaken, if Tirocinium do not make some of my friends angry, and procure me enemies not a few. There is a sting in verse, that prose neither has, nor can have; and I do not know that schools in the gross, and especially public schools, have ever been so pointedly condemned before. But they are become a nuisance, a pest, an abomination, and it is fit that the eyes and noses of mankind should, if possible, be opened to perceive it.

This is indeed an author's letter; but it is an author's letter to his friend. If you will be the friend of an author, you must expect such letters. Come July, and come yourself, with as many of your exterior selves as can possibly come with you.

Yours, my dear William, affectionately, and with your mother's remembrances, W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, May 10, 1784.

WE rejoice in the account you give us of Dr. Johnson. His conversion will indeed be a singular proof of the omnipotence of Grace; and the more singular, the more decided. The world will set his age against his wisdom, and comfort itself with the thought that he must be superannuated. Perhaps, therefore, in order to refute the slander, and do honour to the cause to which he becomes a convert, he could not do better than devote his great abilities, and a considerable part of the remainder of his years, to the production of some important work not immediately connected with the interests of religion. He would thus give proof, that a man of profound learning, and the best sense, may become a child without being a fool; and that to embrace the gospel, is no evidence either of enthusiasm, infirmity, or insanity. But He who calls him will direct him.

On Friday, by particular invitation, we attended an attempt to throw off a balloon at Mr. Throckmorton's, but it did not succeed. We expect, however, to be summoned again in the course of the ensuing week. Mrs. Unwin and I were the party. We were entertained with the utmost politeness. It is not possible to conceive a more engaging and agreeable character than the Gentleman's, or a more consummate assemblage of all that is called good-nature, complaisance, and innocent cheerfulness, than is to be seen in the Lady. They have lately received many gross affronts from the people of this place, on account of their religion. We thought it, therefore, the more necessary to treat them with respect.

Best love, and best wishes, WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, May 22, 1784.

I AM glad to have received at last an account of Dr. Johnson's favourable opinion of my book. I thought it wanting, and had long since concluded that, not having had the happiness to please him, I owed my ignorance of his sentiments to the tenderness of my friends at Hoxton, who would not mortify me with an account of his disapprobation. It occurs to me that I owe him thanks for interposing between me and the resentment of the Reviewers, who seldom show mercy to an advocate for evangelical truth, whether in prose or verse. I therefore enclose a short acknowledgement, which, if you see no impropriety in the measure, you can I imagine without much difficulty convey to him through the hands of Mr. Latrobe. To him I also make my compliments, with thanks for the share he took in the patronage of the volume. If on any account you judge it an inexpedient step, you can easily suppress the letter.

I pity Mr. Bull. What harder task can any man undertake than the management of those, who have reached the age of manhood without having ever felt the force of authority, or passed through any of the preparatory parts of education? I had either forgot, or never adverted to the circumstance, that his disciples were to be men. At present however I am not surprised that, being such, they are found disobedient, untractable, insolent, and conceited; qualities, that generally prevail in the minds of adults in exact proportion to their ignorance..

He dined with us since I received your last. It was on Thursday that he was here. He came dejected, burthened, full of complaints: but we sent him away cheerful. He is very sensible of the prudence, delicacy, and attention to his character, which the society have discovered in their conduct towards him upon this occasion; and indeed it does them honour; for it were past all enduring, if a charge of insufficiency should obtain a moment's regard, when brought by five such coxcombs against a man of his erudition and ability. The worst part of the business is, that unless young men can be found modest, well tempered, humble, and teachable, there seems to be no hope. He is indeed nervous, and may seem to want those stern features, and that determined tone and manner that are almost indispensably requisite in a tutor. But I do not see that in the present case the matter would be much mended, did he possess them. For what impression can a look, or the most emphatical threat be expected to make, where there is no power to make it good? The rod is out of the question. They are too old, though not too wise for that. Impositions, by way of penalty, are equally so, both because they are incapable of performing any, and because at their age, they may choose whether they will submit to them or not. The society may indeed expel them; and these hopeful youths have, it should seem, no great objection to their doing so. There are other academies ready to receive them; and which, because untried, they prefer to yours. They are therefore under no sufficient control, pefectly easy with respect to the consequences of their refractoriness, and of course set no bounds to their insolence. I do not assert it with confidence, but am much inclined to believe that an institution of this kind would succeed better, were the pupils admitted at a much earlier age. It could not indeed be hoped that all would be converted and become fit for the ministry. But having the advantage of spiritual ordinances, it is probable that some would, and the rest, at a proper age, having been soberly and well trained, might be sent out to serve society in some other capacity. But this is thrown out merely by the way, for I already foresee that it would require a change in the whole plan.

I rather wonder that a man of so liberal a mind as Mr. Brewer should be so much hurt by your publication; and wonder no less that after having seen in it the reasons that in-

fluenced you to print it, he should express so much surprise and concern at its appearance. Was not your probity impeached when you were charged with interested motives for continuing in the church? and when the sincerity of your opinion respecting her ritual, discipline and order was called in question? But such is the influence of a denomination, that the most unprejudiced have yet a bias which in the long run discovers itself.

Poor Nat. Gee has disgraced his gray hairs,—He is suspended *ab officio*, and his eldest son says Amen for him. But I suppose William Peace has given you this piece of history, which I therefore needed not to have mentioned. He has probably told you too that Lady Austen is gone to Bath.

This fine May makes us amends for a doleful winter. The hot weather came on so fast, that there was not more than a week's interval between the nakedness of December and the full leaf. We are in good health, and always remember you and Mrs. Newton with sincere affection.

Yours, my dear friend, WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

June 5, 1784.

WHEN you told me that the critique upon my volume was written, though not by Dr. Johnson himself, yet by a friend of his, to whom he recommended the book and the business, I inferred from that expression that I was indebted to him for an active interposition in my favour, and consequently that he had a right to my thanks. But now I concur entirely in sentiment with you, and heartily second your vote for the suppression of thanks which do not seem to be much called for. Yet even now were it possible that I could fall into his company, I should not think a slight acknowledgment misapplied. I was no other way anxious about his opinion, nor could be so, after you and some others had given a favourable one, than it was natural I should be, knowing as I did that his opinion had been consulted. I am affectionately yours, W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, June 21, 1784.

WE are much pleased with your designed improvement of the late preposterous celebrity, and have no doubt that, in good hands, the foolish occasion will turn to good account. A reli-

gious service, instituted in honour of a musician, and performed in the house of God, is a subject that calls loudly for the animadversion of an enlightened minister; and would be no mean one for a satirist, could a poet of that description be found spiritual enough to feel and resent the profanation. It is reasonable to suppose, that in the next year's almanack we shall find the name of Handel among the red-lettered worthies, for it would surely puzzle the Pope to add anything to his canonization.

This unpleasant summer makes me wish for winter. The gloominess of that season is the less felt, both because it is expected, and because the days are short. But such weather, when the days are longest, makes a double winter, and my spirits feel that it does. We have now frosty mornings, and so cold a wind, that even at high noon we have been obliged to break off our walk in the southern side of the garden, and seek shelter, I in the green-house, and Mrs. Unwin by the fire-side. Hay-making begins here to-morrow, and would have begun here sooner, had the weather permitted it.

Mr. Wright called upon us last Sunday. The old gentleman seems happy in being exempted from the effects of time, to such a degree, that, though we meet but once in the year, I cannot perceive that the twelve months that have elapsed have made any change in him. It seems, however, that as much as he loves his master, and as easy as I suppose he has always found his service, he now and then heaves a sigh for liberty, and wishes to taste it before he dies. But his wife is not so minded. She cannot leave a family, the sons and daughters of which seem all to be her own. Her brother died lately in the East Indies, leaving twenty thousand pounds behind him, and half of it to her; but the ship that was bringing home this treasure, is supposed to be lost. Her husband appears perfectly unaffected by the misfortune, and she, perhaps, may even be glad of it. Such an acquisition would have forced her into a state of independence, and have made her her own mistress, whether she would or not. I charged him with a petition to Lord Dartmouth, to send me Cook's last Voyage, which I have a great curiosity to see, and no other means of procuring. I dare say I shall obtain the favour, and have great pleasure in taking my last trip with a voyager whose memory I respect so

much. Farewell, my dear friend; our affectionate remembrances are faithful to you and yours. WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. MATTHEW POWLEY, DEWSBURY, NEAR LEEDS[1].

MY DEAR SIR,

I HAVE read your Antiperfectionism both in folio and quarto with the closest attention I could give it, but being perfectly a stranger to this controversy, am but indifferently qualified to revise what you have written. I can truly say, however, that it pleased me both with respect to the matter and the manner. Your arguments appear to me conclusive, such as may be evaded perhaps, (for what arguments may not by a quibbling adversary?) but unanswerable on the grounds of Scripture, good sense, and candour. I observe, however, that a gentleman who saw your work in Yorkshire, and whose remarks upon it accompanied your books, is of opinion that your opponents do not contend for sinless perfection, as required by Scripture. It may be so; but if they do not, I am utterly at a loss to conceive what colour of plausibility they can give to their argument, or how they can defend it for a moment. It appears too by your quotations from their writings, of the fidelity of which I have no doubt, that, whether they can in reality derive it from Scripture or not, it is a point they very much labour, and at the expense of all honest and sound interpretation. I must therefore take it for granted that your friend misunderstands them in this respect; and if he does, I see no solid objection either to your plan or the execution of it. I have not had time to read their books, though I have hastily skimmed them over, and in doing so found sufficient reason to confirm me in the opinion I have just given of Mr. Atkinson's observation.

Whether it be advisable to publish or not is another question. That they do much mischief, and that unless they can be successfully opposed, they are likely to do much more, is certain. Your undertaking therefore is laudable, and if the seasonableness and expedience of it were the only points to be considered, every friend to truth and sound doctrine would advise you by all means to print. But when I reflect how few readers you are likely to find,—how certain it is that the people principally concerned will be forbidden by Pope John to touch your vo-

[1] *This was the only* letter of Cowper's remaining among the papers of *Mr. Powley's widow*, at her death, Nov. 9, 1835, in her eighty-ninth year.

lume,—that religious persons of your own opinions will perhaps have but little curiosity to see how you prove that to be erroneous which they are already persuaded is so,—and that the world at large care for none of these things, I cannot but fear lest your enterprise should prove an expensive one, and not meet with the success it deserves. You, however, who live where these points have been more agitated than in most other places, must be better qualified than I can possibly be to make an estimate of the probabilities for or against you; and to your judgement therefore, I must leave them. I can only repeat what I said, that such a work seems very much wanted, and that, if it can find readers, yours seems to me exceedingly well calculated to answer the purpose.

I subjoin a few remarks I made as I passed along, which you will abide by or reject as you see good, and am, with Mrs. Unwin's love to you, my dear friend,

Your affectionate, WM. COWPER.

June 25, 1784.

Instead of my notes, which are short, and not very important, I send you an extract from a letter I received last night from Mr. Newton, in answer to one in which I informed him of your design. If it should effect a change in your purpose, which I think not very unlikely, my comments will be of no use; if otherwise, I will transmit them to you on the first summons.

"I wish Mr. Powley's defence of the truth, or his antidote against error, may be very useful; but I own I seldom expect much good from controversial publications, though under some circumstances it is not easy to forbear. It is not pleasing to a minister to see false and hurtful notions sown amongst his hearers. Yet it must be so. The sowing of the wheat will give occasion to the sowing of the tares, and, except endeavours to pull up the tares are managed with a gentle hand, and with great wisdom, the wheat likewise will be hurt. Mr. Fletcher's sermon, which otherwise might ere long be forgotten, will be perpetuated by Mr. Powley's answer. Mr. Fletcher will be more talked of, more thought of, more read in and about Dewsbury. Mr. Powley's book will be read and approved by his own friends, who do not need it; while few of those for whom it is designed will or dare give it a fair perusal; and controversies are apt to betray both writers and readers into either an angry

or self-approving spirit. I cannot easily expatiate on my neighbour's mistakes without admiring my own sagacity; therefore, had I been consulted, I should probably have advised Mr. Powley to go on speaking the truth in love, taking only a slight and occasional notice of what Mr. Anybody is pleased to do or teach; and so far as the Lord gives the truth entrance and hold in the hearts of his people, so far error will be effectually kept out; and it can be kept out this way only. We may persuade folks to like our system of notions, and the next preacher may persuade them to prefer his; but they whom the Lord persuades will not so readily part with what he has taught them."

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, July 3, 1784.

I WAS sorry that I could only take a flying leave of you. When the coach stopped at the door, I thought you had been in your chamber; my dishabille would not otherwise have prevented my running down for the sake of a more suitable parting.

We rejoice that you had a safe journey, and though we should have rejoiced still more had you had no occasion for a physician, we are glad that, having had need of one, you had the good fortune to find him. Let us hear soon that his advice has proved effectual, and that you are delivered from all ill symptoms.

Thanks for the care you have taken to furnish me with a dictionary. It is rather strange that at my time of life, and after a youth spent in classical pursuits, I should want one; and stranger still that, being possessed at present of only one Latin author in the world, I should think it worth while to purchase one. I say that it is strange, and indeed I think it so myself. But I have a thought that when my present labours of the pen are ended, I may go to school again, and refresh my spirits by a little intercourse with the Mantuan and the Sabine bard; and perhaps by a re-perusal of some others, whose works we generally lay by at that period of life when we are best qualified to read them, when, the judgement and the taste being formed, their beauties are least likely to be overlooked.

This change of wind and weather comforts me, and I should *have enjoyed* the first fine morning I have seen this month

with a peculiar relish, if our new tax-maker had not put me out of temper. I am angry with him, not only for the matter, but for the manner of his proposal. When he lays his impost upon horses, he is even jocular, and laughs; though considering that wheels, and miles, and grooms were taxed before, a graver countenance upon the occasion would have been more decent. But he provokes me still more by reasoning as he does on the justification of the tax upon candles. Some families, he says, will suffer little by it;—Why? Because they are so poor, that they cannot afford themselves more than ten pounds in the year. Excellent! They can use but few, therefore they will pay but little, and consequently will be but little burthened, an argument which for its cruelty and effrontery seems worthy of a hero; but he does not avail himself of the whole force of it, nor with all his wisdom had sagacity enough to see that it contains, when pushed to its utmost extent, a free discharge and acquittal of the poor from the payment of any tax at all; a commodity, being once made too expensive for their pockets, will cost them nothing, for they will not buy it. Rejoice, therefore, O ye pennyless! the minister will indeed send you to bed in the dark, but your remaining halfpenny will be safe; instead of being spent in the useless luxury of candlelight, it will buy you a roll for breakfast, which you will eat no doubt with gratitude to the man who so kindly lessens the number of your disbursements, and while he seems to threaten your money, saves it. I wish he would remember, that the halfpenny, which government imposes, the shopkeeper will swell to twopence. I wish he would visit the miserable huts of our lace-makers at Olney, and see them working in the winter months, by the light of a farthing candle, from four in the afternoon till midnight. I wish he had laid his tax upon the ten thousand lamps that illuminate the Pantheon, upon the flambeaux that wait upon ten thousand chariots and sedans in an evening, and upon the wax candles that give light to ten thousand card-tables. I wish, in short, that he would consider the pockets of the poor as sacred, and that to tax a people already so necessitous, is but to discourage the little industry that is left among us, by driving the laborious to despair.

A neighbour of mine, in Silver End, keeps an ass; the ass lives on the other side of the garden wall, and I am writing in the green-house: *it happens* that he is this morning most

musically disposed, either cheered by the fine weather, or by some new tune which he has just acquired, or by finding his voice more harmonious than usual. It would be cruel to mortify so fine a singer, therefore I do not tell him that he interrupts and hinders me; but I venture to tell you so, and to plead his performance in excuse of my abrupt conclusion.

I send you the goldfinches, with which you will do as you see good. We have an affectionate remembrance of your late visit, and of all our friends at Stock.

Believe me ever yours, W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, July 5, 1784.

A DEARTH of materials, a consciousness that my subjects are for the most part and must be uninteresting and unimportant, but above all, a poverty of animal spirits, that makes writing much a great fatigue to me, have occasioned my choice of smaller paper. Acquiesce in the justness of these reasons for the present; and if ever the times should mend with me, I sincerely promise to amend with them.

Homer says on a certain occasion, that Jupiter, when he was wanted at home, was gone to partake of an entertainment provided for him by the Æthiopians. If by Jupiter we understand the weather, or the season, as the ancients frequently did, we may say, that our English Jupiter has been absent on account of some such invitation; during the whole month of June he left us to experience almost the rigours of winter. This fine day, however, affords us some hope that the feast is ended, and that we shall enjoy his company without the interference of his Æthiopian friends again.

Is it possible that the wise men of antiquity could entertain a real reverence for the fabulous rubbish, which they dignified with the name of religion? We, who have been favoured from our infancy with so clear a light, are perhaps hardly competent to decide the question, and may strive in vain to imagine the absurdities that even a good understanding may receive as truths, when totally unaided by revelation. It seems, however, that men, whose conceptions upon other subjects were often sublime, whose reasoning powers were undoubtedly equal to your own, and whose management in matters of jurisprudence that required a very industrious examination of evidence, was

as acute and subtle as that of a modern Attorney-general, could not be the dupes of such imposture as a child among us would detect and laugh at. Juvenal, I remember, introduces one of his Satires with an observation, that there were some in his day who had the hardiness to laugh at the stories of Tartarus, and Styx, and Charon, and of the frogs that croak upon the banks of Lethe, giving his reader at the same time cause to suspect that he was himself one of that profane number. Horace, on the other hand, declares in sober sadness that he would not for all the world get into a boat with a man who had divulged the Eleusinian mysteries. Yet we know that those mysteries, whatever they might be, were altogether as unworthy to be esteemed divine as the mythology of the vulgar. How then must we determine? If Horace were a good and orthodox heathen, how came Juvenal to be such an ungracious libertine in principle, as to ridicule the doctrines which the other held as sacred? Their opportunities of information, and their mental advantages, were equal. I feel myself rather inclined to believe, that Juvenal's avowed infidelity was sincere, and that Horace was no better than a canting hypocritical professor.

You must grant me a dispensation for saying any thing, whether it be sense or nonsense, upon the subject of politics. It is truly a matter in which I am so little interested, that were it not that it sometimes serves me for a theme, when I can find no other, I should never mention it. I would forfeit a large sum if, after advertising a month in the gazette, the minister of the day, whoever he may be, could discover a man that cares about him or his measures so little as I do. When I say that I would forfeit a large sum, I mean to have it understood that I would forfeit such a sum, if I had it. If Mr. Pitt be indeed a virtuous man, as such I respect him. But at the best, I fear, that he will have to say at last with Æneas,

Si Pergama dextrâ
Defendi possent, etiam hâc defensa fuissent.

Be he what he may, I do not like his taxes. At least I am much disposed to quarrel with some of them. The charge of ten shillings upon horses, considering that travellers were heavily charged before, appears to me unreasonable: and herein I must be at least disinterested, for I never ride. But the additional duty upon candles, by which the poor will be much

affected, hurts me most. He says indeed that they will but little feel it, because even now they can hardly afford the use of them. He had certainly put no compassion into his budget, when he produced from it this tax, and such an argument to support it. Justly translated it seems to amount to this,—"Make the necessaries of life too expensive for the poor to reach them, and you will save their money. If they buy but few candles, they will pay but little tax; and if they buy none, the tax as to them, will be annihilated." True. But, in the mean time, they will break their shins against their furniture, if they have any; and will be but little the richer, when the hours, in which they might work, if they could see, shall be deducted.

Mr. Unwin left us on Wednesday. Mrs. Powley is with us, and begs to be remembered. Mr. Grindon is confined under a second stroke of the apoplexy, and is thought to be in danger. I enclose a letter to old Mr. Small, who has sent me some rhubarb seed, for which I write to thank him, and shall be your debtor for a penny, by way of *viaticum*. Mrs. Unwin, except that she has a pain in her face, is well. I have bought a great dictionary, and want nothing but Latin authors to furnish me with the use of it. Had I purchased them first, I had begun at the right end. But I could not afford it. I beseech you admire my prudence.

Vivite, valete, et mementote nostrûm.

Yours affectionately, W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, July 12, 1784.

YOUR sister leaves us this evening; her journey will be on foot to Newport: your mother and I mean to accompany her as far as to the limits of our usual walk. The coach takes her up at five in the morning. It will be on both sides a sorrowful parting; the distance of the separation and the length of it will make it such. But this first part of the business is rather in danger of being disconcerted: the weather lowers and threatens to make a walk impracticable. How the ladies will settle it, therefore, as yet I know not, having seen neither of them this morning. Your sister desires me to thank you for the hint given to Miss Unwin, for which she holds herself not the less indebted to you though it did not succeed.

You are going to Bristol. A lady, not long since our very near neighbour, is probably there: she *was* there very lately. If you should chance to fall into her company, remember, if you please, that we found the connexion on some accounts an inconvenient one, that we do not wish to renew it, and conduct yourself accordingly. A character with which we spend all our time should be made on purpose for us: too much or too little of any single ingredient spoils all: in the instance in question, the dissimilitude was too great not to be felt continually, and consequently made our intercourse unpleasant. We have reason, however, to believe that she has given up all thoughts of a return to Olney.

I think with you that Vinny's line is not pure. If he knew any authority that would have justified his substitution of a participle for a substantive, he would have done well to have noted it in the margin. But I am much inclined to think that he did not. Poets are sometimes exposed to difficulties insurmountable by lawful means, whence I imagine was originally derived that indulgence that allows them the use of what is called the *poetica licentia*. But that liberty, I believe, contents itself with the abbreviation or protraction of a word, or an alteration in the quantity of a syllable, and never presumes to trespass upon grammatical propriety. I have dared to attempt to correct my master, but am not bold enough to say that I have succeeded. Neither am I sure that my memory serves me correctly with the line that follows; but when I recollect the English, am persuaded that it cannot differ much from the true one. This therefore is my edition of the passage—

Basia amatori tot tum permissa beato.

Or,

Basia quæ juveni indulsit Susanna beato
Navarcha optaret maximus esse sua.

The preceding lines I have utterly forgotten, and am consequently at a loss to know whether the distich, thus managed, will connect itself with them easily, and as it ought.

We thank you for the drawing of your house. I never knew my idea of what I had never seen resemble the original so much. At some time or other you have doubtless given me an exact account of it, and I have retained the faithful impression made by your description. It is a comfortable abode, and the

time I hope will come when I shall enjoy more than the mere representation of it.

I have not yet read the last Review, but dipping into it, I accidentally fell upon their account of Hume's Essay on Suicide. I am glad that they have liberality enough to condemn the licentiousness of an author whom they so much admire :—I say liberality, for there is as much bigotry in the world to that man's errors as there is in the hearts of some sectaries to their peculiar modes and tenets. He is the Pope of thousands, as blind and presumptuous as himself. God certainly infatuates those who will not see. It were otherwise impossible, that a man, naturally shrewd and sensible, and whose understanding has had all the advantages of constant exercise and cultivation, could have satisfied himself, or have hoped to satisfy others with such palpable sophistry as has not even the grace of fallacy to recommend it. His silly assertion that because it would be no sin to divert the course of the Danube, therefore it is none to let out a few ounces of blood from an artery, would justify not suicide only, but homicide also; for the lives of ten thousand men are of less consequence to their country, than the course of that river to the regions though which it flows. Population would soon make society amends for the loss of her ten thousand members, but the loss of the Danube would be felt by all the millions that dwell upon its banks to all generations. But the life of a man and the water of a river can never come into competition with each other in point of value, unless in the estimation of an unprincipled philosopher.

I thank you for your offer of the classics. When I want I will borrow. Horace is my own. Homer, with a clavis, I have had possession of some years. They are the property of Mr. Jones. A Virgil, the property of Mr. Scott, I have had as long. I am nobody in the affair of tenses, unless when you are present. Yours ever, W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, July 19, 1784,

NOTWITHSTANDING the justness of the comparison by which you illustrate the folly and wickedness of a congregation assembled to pay divine honours to the memory of Handel, I could not help laughing at the picture you have drawn of the musical convicts. The subject indeed is awful, and your man-

ner of representing it is perfectly just; yet I laughed and must have laughed had I been one of your hearers. But the ridicule lies in the preposterous conduct which you reprove, and not in your reproof of it, A people so musically mad as to make not only their future trial the subject of a concert, but even the message of mercy from their King, and the only one he will ever send them, must excuse me if I am merry where there is more cause to be sad; for melancholy as their condition is, their behaviour under it is too ludicrous not to be felt as such, and would conquer even a more settled gravity than mine.

In those days when Bedlam was open to the cruel curiosity of holiday ramblers, I have been a visitor there. Though a boy, I was not altogether insensible of the misery of the poor captives, nor destitute of feeling for them. But the madness of some of them had such a humorous air, and displayed itself in so many whimsical freaks, that it was impossible not to be entertained, at the same time that I was angry with myself for being so. A line of Bourne's is very expressive of the spectacle which this world exhibits, tragi-comical as the incidents of it are, absurd in themselves, but terrible in their consequences:

Sunt res humanæ flebile ludibrium.

An instance of this deplorable merriment has occurred in the course of last week at Olney. A feast gave the occasion to a catastrophe truly shocking. Lucy and his wife, and two women whose name is Hine, relations of the glazier, went in a covered cart to Woolaston, to partake of the anniversary merry-making at that place. Having spent the day, no doubt, very agreeably, they got into their tumbril, expecting nothing but they should soon be safe at home again. Some geese were in the horse-path, and in danger of being run over. Lucy waved his hat to scare them, forgetting that his horse might possibly be frightened too. He was so, and ran away. On one side of the road was a steep declivity, where two women were killed by an overturn about two years ago: fearing the same fate, and the women screaming and clinging about him in such a manner that he was unable to guide his horse, Lucy gave him a sudden and violent twitch to the other side. In a moment, running as he did at full speed, he dashed himself and the cart against a wall: the force of the shock threw him and broke all his harness, a circumstance without which not a single life would have been saved. Lucy received a violent contusion

on his head, and his legs were terribly torn. One of the women had her arm broken and her wrist dislocated; the other was only bruised: but Mrs. Lucy was the greatest sufferer, having her scull fractured, and one side of her face with half her scalp so completely separated from the bone, that when her husband went to take her up, he mistook the loose flesh for the cushion she wore upon her head. The story is almost too shocking to be related, but having begun it I could not choose whether I would finish it or not. She is, however, alive, and is attended at Woolaston, from which place she could not be removed, by Dr. Kerr. I heard yesterday that there were hopes of her recovery, which is the more wonderful as she is with child. So dangerous it is to all, and so fatal to some, to forget that we are not introduced into this world merely to amuse ourselves for a few years as well as we can, and then to pass out of it unnoticed by Him who sent us.

About a month since I had a letter from one whom you remember, and from whom I little expected to hear,—James Nichols. He wrote to enquire after his old connexions at Olney, particularly after Nelly Langton, desiring to be informed of all that has happened here; how many births, deaths, and marriages, I suppose, have taken place at Olney since he left it: but I have not answered him, neither do I intend it. He says much about the Lord and his dealings with him; but I have long considered James as a sort of pedler and hawker in these matters, rather than as a creditable and substantial merchant. He is now a mason's labourer at Ostend, and when he wrote had just received a hurt in his leg by a fall from the top of a ladder.

Remember us as we remember you; that is, with undiminished friendship and affection.

Yours, my dear friend, WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, July 28, 1784.

I MAY perhaps be short, but am not willing that you should go to Lymington without first having had a line from me. I know that place well, having spent six weeks there above twenty years ago. The town is neat, and the country delightful. You walk well, and will consequently find a part of the coast, called Hall-Cliff, within the reach of your ten toes. It was a favourite walk of mine: to the best of my remembrance,

about three miles distance from Lymington. There you may stand upon the beach, and contemplate the Needle-rock; at least you might have done so twenty years ago. But since that time I think it is fallen from its base, and is drowned, and is no longer a visible object of contemplation. I wish you may pass your time there happily, as in all probability you will; perhaps usefully too to others, undoubtedly so to yourself.

The manner in which you have been previously made acquainted with Mr. Gilpin gives a providential air to your journey, and affords reason to hope that you may be charged with a message to him. I admire him as a biographer. But as Mrs. Unwin and I were talking of him last night, we could not but wonder that a man should see so much excellence in the lives, and so much glory and beauty in the deaths of the martyrs, whom he has recorded, and at the same time disapprove the principles that produced the very conduct he admired. It seems, however, a step towards the truth, to applaud the fruits of it; and one cannot help thinking that one step more would put him in possession of the truth itself. By your means may he be enabled to take it!

We are obliged to you for the preference you would have given to Olney, had not Providence determined your course another way. But as, when we saw you last summer, you gave us no reason to expect you this, we are the less disappointed. At your age and mine, biennial visits have such a gap between them that we cannot promise ourselves upon those terms very numerous future interviews. But whether ours are to be many or few, you will always be welcome to me, for the sake of the comfortable days that are past. In my present state of mind my friendship for you indeed is as warm as ever. But I feel myself very indifferently qualified to be your companion. Other days than these inglorious and unprofitable ones are promised me, and when I see them I shall rejoice. In the meantime my faith in the assurances of my friends is too weak to be productive of anything like joy. My sensations upon such occasions are rather like those of poor old Tantalus, if he be still where the poets placed him.

I saw the advertisement of your adversary's book. He is happy at least in this, that, whether he have brains or none, he strikes without the danger of being stricken again. He could not wish to engage in a controversy upon easier terms.

The other whose publication is postponed till Christmas, is resolved, I suppose, to do something. But do what he will, he cannot prove that you have not been aspersed, or that you have not refuted the charge; which, unless he can do, I think he will do little to the purpose.

We heartily wish that the sea-bathing may be of use to Eliza: I have known it serviceable in similar cases. Mrs. Unwin thinks of you, and always with a grateful recollection of yours and Mrs. Newton's kindness. She has had a nervous fever lately; but I hope she is better. The weather forbids walking, a prohibition hurtful to us both. I forgot to tell you that Mr. Grindon died soon after I had informed you of his illness: his son succeeds him. We heartily wish you a good journey, and are affectionately yours, W. C. AND M. U.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Aug. 14, 1784.

I GIVE you joy of a journey performed without trouble or danger. You have travelled five hundred miles without having encountered either. Some neighbours of ours, about a fortnight since, made an excursion only to a neighbouring village, and brought home with them fractured skulls, and broken limbs, and one of them is dead. For my own part, I seem pretty much exempted from the dangers of the road,—thanks to that tender interest and concern which the legislature takes in my security! Having, no doubt, their fears lest so precious a life should determine too soon, and by some untimely stroke of misadventure, they have made wheels and horses so expensive, that I am not likely to owe my death to either.

Your mother and I continue to visit Weston daily, and find in those agreeable bowers such amusement as leaves us but little room to regret that we can go no further. Having touched that theme, I cannot abstain from the pleasure of telling you that our neighbours in that place, being about to leave it for some time, and meeting us there but a few evenings before their departure, entreated us during their absence to consider the garden, and all its contents, as our own, and to gather whatever we liked, without the least scruple. We accordingly picked strawberries as often as we went, and brought home as many bundles of honeysuckles as served to perfume our dwelling till they returned. I hear that Mr. Throckmorton is making another balloon, a paper one, containing sixteen quires.

It is to fly upon the wings of ignited spirits, and will therefore, I suppose, be sent up at night. I take it for granted that we shall be invited to the spectacle; but whether we shall have the courage to expose ourselves to the inconveniences of a nocturnal visit, is at present doubtful.

Once more, by the aid of Lord Dartmouth, I find myself a voyager in the Pacific Ocean. In our last night's lecture we were made acquainted with the island of Hapaee, where we had never been before. The French and Italians, it seems, have but little cause to plume themselves on account of their achievements in the dancing way; and we may hereafter, without much repining at it, acknowledge their superiority in that art. They are equalled, perhaps excelled, by savages. How wonderful, that without any intercourse with a politer world, and having made no proficiency in any other accomplishment, they should in this, however, have made themselves such adepts, that for regularity and grace of motion they might even be our masters! How wonderful too, that with such a tub and a stick they should be able to produce such harmony, as persons accustomed to the sweetest music cannot but hear with pleasure! Is it not very difficult to account for the striking difference of character, that obtains among the inhabitants of these islands? Many of them are near neighbours to each other, and their opportunities of improvement much the same; yet some of them are in a degree polite, discover symptoms of taste, and have a sense of elegance; while others are as rude as we naturally expect to find a people who have never had any communication with the northern hemisphere. These volumes furnish much matter of philosophical speculation, and often entertain me even while I am not employed in reading them.

I am sorry you have not been able to ascertain the doubtful intelligence I have received on the subject of cork skirts and bosoms. I am now every day occupied in giving all the grace I can to my new production; and in transcribing it I shall soon arrive at the passage that censures that folly, which I shall be loth to expunge, but which I must not spare, unless the criminals can be convicted. The world however is not so unproductive of subjects for censure, but that it may possibly supply me with some other that may serve as well.

If you know *any body that* is writing, or intends to write,

an epic poem on the new regulation of *franks*, you may give him my compliments, and these two lines for a beginning—

Heu quot amatores nunc turquet epistola rara!
Vectigal certum, peritoraque gratia FRANKI!

Yours faithfully, W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, August 16, 1784.

HAD you not expressed a desire to hear from me before you take leave of Lymington, I certainly should not have answered you so soon. Knowing the place, and the amusement it affords, I should have had more modesty than to suppose myself capable of adding any thing to your present entertainments worthy to rank with them. I am not however totally destitute of such pleasures as an inland country may pretend to. If my windows do not command a view of the ocean, at least they look out upon a profusion of mignonette, which, if it be not so grand an object, is however quite as fragrant: and if I have not a hermit in a grotto, I have nevertheless myself in a greenhouse,—a less venerable figure perhaps, but not at all less animated than he: nor are we in this nook altogether unfurnished with such means of philosophical experiment and speculation as at present the world rings with. On Thursday morning last, we sent up a balloon from Emberton meadow. Thrice it rose, and as oft descended; and in the evening it performed another flight at Newport, where it went up, and came down no more. Like the arrow discharged at the pigeon in the Trojan games, it kindled in the air, and was consumed in a moment. I have not heard what interpretation the soothsayers have given to the omen, but shall wonder a little if the Newton shepherd prognosticate any thing less from it than the bloody war that was ever waged in Europe.

I am reading Cook's last voyage, and am much pleased and amused with it. It seems that in some of the Friendly isles, they excel so much in dancing, and perform that operation with such exquisite delicacy and grace, that they are not surpassed even upon our European stages. O! that Vestris had been in the ship, that he might have seen himself outdone by a savage. The paper indeed tells us that the queen of France *has clapped* this king of capers up in prison, for declining to *dance before her*, on a pretence of sickness, when in fact he was *in perfect health*. If this be true, perhaps he may by this time

be prepared to second such a wish as mine, and to think that the durance he suffers would be well exchanged for a dance at Anamooka. I should however as little have expected to hear that these islanders had such consummate skill in an art, that requires so much taste in the conduct of the person, as that they were good mathematicians and astronomers. Defective as they are in every branch of knowledge, and in every other species of refinement, it seems wonderful that they should arrive at such perfection in the dance, which some of our English gentlemen, with all the assistance of French instruction, find it impossible to learn. We must conclude therefore that particular nations have a genius for particular feats; and that our neighbours in France, and our friends in the South Sea, have minds very nearly akin, though they inhabit countries so very remote from each other.

Mrs. Unwin remembers to have been in company with Mr. Gilpin at her brother's. She thought him very sensible and polite, and consequently very agreeable.

We are truly glad that Mrs. Newton and yourself are so well, and that there is reason to hope that Eliza is better. You will learn from this letter that we are so, and that for my own part I am not quite so low in spirits as at some times. Learn too, what you knew before, that we love you all, and that I am

Your affectionate friend, W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, August.

If the heat of the weather at London is such as it is here, and you are now employed in writing, you will find it hard work; though a reaper who stoops with his nose within an inch of his sickle all the day, would envy both you and me, and think us but laborious triflers at the best.

Mr. Teedon has received your kind and seasonable donation at two payments; two guineas before your remittance came, and the remainder in Weston Field. We met him there just after we had with difficulty dragged ourselves up that steep and close lane, and were not a little fearful that his honest but rather verbose expressions of gratitude would cost us both a sore throat,—our pores standing wide open for the reception of an east wind, which blew rather sharp over the top of the hill.

You have seen Mr. Ashburner, and are consequently in pos-

session of the history of the Warrington pew: it is difficult to say at present what will be the contents of the next chapter, but the conclusion is likely to prove disastrous to Mr. Page, and not more favourable to his friend Mr. Smith; for by the best information we can procure, the latter gentleman having omitted to take the opinion of a vestry, (deeming it, I suppose, an idle ceremony, not worthy the attention of a churchwarden acting upon his liberal and enlarged plan) has mortally offended the principal parishioners, who are determined that he and his principal shall pay for the alteration; a resolution in which, without doubt, they will be warranted by the law. A mind accustomed to reflection may derive a lesson from almost every incident that occurs; and the lesson to be derived from this seems to be, that the peace of that parish is sure to be disturbed, and not likely to be soon restored, that is burthened with a quarrelsome curate and a meddlesome churchwarden.

It is natural before the winter is half over to wish for the return of spring; but we shall wish for the next spring with unusual ardour.

Cætera desunt.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Olney, Sept. 11, 1784.

I AM obliged to you for a plentiful supply of franks, and hope that you have not been inattentive to my interests upon the occasion but have furnished yourself with an equal number bearing my address. You have my thanks also for the inquiries you have made upon the subject of male rumps corked. Despairing however of meeting with such confirmation of that new mode, as would warrant a general stricture, I had, before the receipt of your last, discarded the passage in which I had censured it. I am proceeding in my transcript with all possible dispatch, having nearly finished the fourth book, and hoping, by the end of the month, to have completed the work. When finished, that no time may be lost, I purpose taking the first opportunity to transmit it to Leman Street; but must beg that you will give me in your next an exact direction, that it may proceed to the mark without any hazard of a miscarriage. A second transcript of it would be a labour I should very reluctantly undertake; for though I have kept copies of all the material alterations, there are many minutiæ of which I have

nade none: it is besides slavish work, and of all occupations hat which I dislike the most. I know that you will lose no ime in reading it, but I must beg you likewise to lose none in onveying it to Johnson, that if he chooses to print it, it may o to press immediately; if not, that it may be offered directly o your friend Longman, or any other. Not that I doubt Johnson's acceptance of it, for he will find it more *ad captum opuli* than the former. I have not numbered the lines, except of the four first books, which amount to three thousand wo hundred and seventy-six. I imagine therefore that the whole contains about five thousand. I mention this circumstance now, because it may save him some trouble in casting the size of the book, and I might possibly forget it in another letter.

About a fortnight since, we had a visit from Mr. Venn, whom I had not seen for many years. He introduced himself to me very politely, with many thanks on his own part, and on the part of his family, for the amusement which my book had afforded them. He said he was sure that it must make its way, and hoped that I had not laid down the pen. I only told him in general terms, that the use of the pen was necessary to my well being, but gave him no hint of this last production. He said that one passage in particular had absolutely electrified him, meaning the description of the Briton in Table Talk. He seemed indeed to emit some sparks when he mentioned it. I was glad to have that picture noticed by a man of a cultivated mind, because I had always thought well of it myself, and had never heard it distinguished before. Assure yourself, my William, that though I would not write thus freely on the subject of me or mine to any but yourself, the pleasure I have in doing it is a most innocent one, and partakes not in the least degree, so far as my conscience is to be credited, of that vanity with which authors are in general so justly chargeable. Whatever I do, I confess that I most sincerely wish to do it well, and when I have reason to hope that I have succeeded, am pleased indeed, but not proud; for He, who has placed every thing out of the reach of man, except what he freely gives him, has made it impossible for a reflecting mind, that knows this, to indulge so silly a passion for a moment.

Our connexion with the Westonites is much in *statu quo*. We frequently meet, and are always most perfectly polite. Last week we encountered the whole family in the evening.

Mr. Throckmorton said that he should send up a balloon in half an hour, and that if we had any curiosity to see it, and would step home with him, by the time we had drank a dish of tea, it would be ready to mount. At this time, however, it was beginning to be dark, and being well assured that the delay would be longer than he supposed, we excused ourselves on account of the late hour; in fact, we should have had two miles to walk between ten and eleven o'clock at night, which would not have suited either of us. We expect, however, to be invited to a daylight exhibition of the same kind on Tuesday. He has sent us partridges and a hare,

Yours, W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Sept. 11, 1784.

I HAVE never seen Dr. Cotton's book, concerning which your sisters question me, nor did I know, till you mentioned it, that he had written any thing newer than his Visions. I have no doubt that it is so far worthy of him, as to be pious and sensible, and I believe no man living is better qualified to write on such subjects as his title seems to announce. Some years have passed since I heard from him, and considering his great age, it is probable that I shall hear from him no more; but I shall always respect him. He is truly a philosopher, according to my judgement of the character, every tittle of his knowledge in natural subjects being connected in his mind with the firm belief of an Omnipotent agent.

Yours, &c. W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Sept. 18, 1784.

FOLLOWING your good example, I lay before me a sheet of my largest paper. It was this moment fair and unblemished, but I have begun to blot it, and having begun, am not likely to cease till I have spoiled it. I have sent you many a sheet that in my judgement of it has been very unworthy of your acceptance, but my conscience was in some measure satisfied by reflecting, that if it were good for nothing, at the same time it cost you nothing, except the trouble of reading it. But the case is altered now. You must pay a solid price for frothy matter, and though I do not absolutely pick your pocket, yet you lose your money, and, as the saying is, are never the *wiser; a saying* literally fulfilled to the reader of my epistles.

My greenhouse is never so pleasant as when we are just upon the point of being turned out of it. The gentleness of the autumnal suns, and the calmness of this latter season, make it a much more agreeable retreat than we ever find it in summer; when, the winds being generally brisk, we cannot cool it by admitting a sufficient quantity of air, without being at the same time incommoded by it. But now I sit with all the windows and the door wide open, and am regaled with the scent of every flower in a garden as full of flowers as I have known how to make it. We keep no bees, but if I lived in a hive I should hardly hear more of their music. All the bees in the neighbourhood resort to a bed of mignonette, opposite to the window, and pay me for the honey they get out of it by a hum, which, though rather monotonous, is as agreeable to my ear as the whistling of my linnets. All the sounds that nature utters are delightful,—at least in this country. I should not perhaps find the roaring of lions in Africa, or of bears in Russia, very pleasing; but I know no beast in England whose voice I do not account musical, save and except always the braying of an ass. The notes of all our birds and fowls please me, without one exception. I should not indeed think of keeping a goose in a cage, that I might hang him up in the parlour for the sake of his melody, but a goose upon a common, or in a farm-yard, is no bad performer; and as to insects, if the black beetle, and beetles indeed of all hues, will keep out of my way, I have no objection to any of the rest; on the contrary, in whatever key they sing, from the gnat's fine treble to the bass of the humble bee, I admire them all. Seriously however it strikes me as a very observable instance of providential kindness to man, that such an exact accord has been contrived between his ear, and the sounds with which, at least in a rural situation, it is almost every moment visited. All the world is sensible of the uncomfortable effect that certain sounds have upon the nerves, and consequently upon the spirits:—and if a sinful world had been filled with such as would have curdled the blood, and have made the sense of hearing a perpetual inconvenience, I do not know that we should have had a right to complain. But now the fields, the woods, the gardens, have each their concert, and the ear of man is for ever regaled by creatures who seem only to please themselves. Even the ears that are deaf to the Gospel, are continually entertained, though without knowing it, by sounds for which

they are solely indebted to its author. There is somewhere in infinite space a world that does not roll within the precincts of mercy, and as it is reasonable, and even scriptural, to suppose that there is music in Heaven, in those dismal regions perhaps the reverse of it is found; tones so dismal, as to make woe itself more insupportable, and to acuminate even despair. But my paper admonishes me in good time to draw the reins, and to check the descent of my fancy into deeps, with which she is but too familiar.

Our best love attends you both, with yours,

Sum ut semper, tui studiosissimus,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, Oct. 2, 1784.

A POET can but ill spare time for prose. The truth is, I am in haste to finish my transcript, that you may receive it time enough to give it a leisurely reading before you go to town; which whether I shall be able to accomplish, is at present uncertain. I have the whole punctuation to settle, which in blank verse is of the last importance, and of a species peculiar to that composition; for I know no use of points, unless to direct the voice, the management of which, in the reading of blank verse, being more difficult than in the reading of any other poetry, requires perpetual hints and notices, to regulate the inflections, cadences, and pauses. This however is an affair that in spite of grammarians must be left pretty much *ad libitum scriptoris;* for I suppose every author points according to his own reading. If I can send the parcel to the waggon by one o'clock next Wednesday, you will have it on Saturday the ninth. But this is more than I expect. Perhaps I shall not be able to dispatch it till the eleventh, in which case it will not reach you till the thirteenth. I rather think, that the latter of these two periods will obtain, because, besides the punctuation, I have the argument of each book to transcribe. Add to this, that in writing for the printer, I am forced to write my best, which makes slow work. The motto of the whole is—*Fit surculus arbor.* If you can put the author's name under it, do so;—if not, it must go without one, for I know not to whom to ascribe it. It was a motto taken by a certain prince of Orange, in the year 1733, but not to a poem of his own writing, or indeed to any poem at all, but, as *I think,* to a medal.

Mr. —— is a Cornish member; but for what place in Cornwall I know not. All I know of him is, that I saw him once clap his two hands upon a rail, meaning to leap over it;—but he did not think the attempt a safe one, and therefore took them off again. He was in company with Mr. Throckmorton. With that gentleman we drank chocolate, since I wrote last. The occasion of our visit was, as usual, a balloon. Your mother invited her, and I him, and they promised to return the visit, but have not yet performed. *Tout le monde se trouvoit là*, as you may suppose, among the rest, Mrs. W——. She was driven to the door by her son, a boy of seventeen, in a phaeton, drawn by four horses from Lilliput. This is an ambiguous expression, and should what I write now be legible a thousand years hence, might puzzle commentators. Be it known therefore to the Alduses and the Stevenses of ages yet to come, that I do not mean to affirm that Mrs. W—— herself came from Lilliput that morning, or indeed that she was ever there, but merely to describe the horses, as being so diminutive, that they might be, with propriety, said to be Lilliputian.

The privilege of franking having been so cropped, I know not in what manner I and my bookseller are to settle the conveyance of proof sheets hither, and back again. They must travel I imagine by coach, a large quantity of them at a time; for, like other authors, I find myself under a poetical necessity of being frugal.

We love you all, jointly and separately, as usual. W. C.

I have not seen, nor shall see, the Dissenter's answer to Mr. Newton, unless you can furnish me with it.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, October 9, 1784.

THE pains you have taken to disengage our correspondence from the expense with which it was threatened, convincing me that my letters, trivial as they are, are yet acceptable to you, encourage me to observe my usual punctuality. You complain of unconnected thoughts. I believe there is not a head in the world but might utter the same complaint, and that all would do so, were they all as attentive to their own vagaries, and as honest as yours. The descriptions of your meditations at least suits mine: perhaps I can go a step beyond you, upon the same ground, and assert with the strictest truth that I not only do not think with connexion, but that I frequently do not think

at all. I am much mistaken if I do not often catch myself napping in this way; for when I ask myself what was the last idea, (as the ushers at Westminster ask an idle boy what was the last word), I am not able to answer, but, like the boy in question, am obliged to stare and say nothing. This may be a very unphilosophical account of myself, and may clash very much with the general opinion of the learned, that the soul being an active principle, and her activity consisting in thought, she must consequently always think. But pardon me, *messieurs les philosophes*, there are moments, when if I think at all, I am utterly unconscious of doing so, and the thought, and the consciousness of it, seem to me at least, who am no philosopher, to be inseparable from each other. Perhaps however we may both be right; and if you will grant me that I do not always think, I will in return concede to you the activity you contend for, and will qualify the difference between us by supposing that though the soul be in herself, as you say, an active principle, the influence of her present union with a principle that is not such, makes her often dormant, suspends her operations, and affects her with a sort of deliquium, in which she suffers a temporary loss of all her functions. I have related to you my experience truly, and without disguise; you must therefore either admit my assertion, that the soul does not necessarily always act, or deny that mine is a human soul; and though I be sometimes more than half of that opinion myself, it is a negative which I am sure you will not easily prove. So much for a dispute which I little thought of being engaged in to-day.

Last night I had a letter from Lord Dartmouth. It was to apprize me of the safe arrival of Cook's last voyage, which he was so kind as to lend me, in St. James's Square. He writes, however, from Sandwell. The reading of those volumes afforded me much amusement, and I hope some instruction. No observation however forced itself upon me with more violence than one, that I could not help making on the death of Captain Cook. God is a jealous God, and at Owhyhee the poor man was content to be worshipped. From that moment, the remarkable interposition of Providence in his favour was converted into an opposition, that thwarted all his purposes. He left the scene of his deification, but was driven back to it by a most violent storm, in which he suffered more than in any that *had preceded it*. When he departed he left his worshippers still *infatuated* with an idea of his godship, consequently well dis-

posed to serve him. At his return he found them sullen, distrustful, and mysterious. A trifling theft was committed, which, by a blunder of his own in pursuing the thief after the property had been restored, was magnified into an affair of the last importance. One of their favourite chiefs was killed too by a blunder. Nothing, in short, but blunder and mistake attended him, till he fell breathless into the water, and then all was smooth again. The world indeed will not take notice, or see, that the dispensation bore evident marks of divine displeasure; but a mind I think in any degree spiritual cannot overlook them. We know from truth itself, that the death of Herod was for a similar offence. But Herod was in no sense a believer in God, nor had enjoyed half the opportunities with which our poor countryman had been favoured. It may be urged perhaps that he was in jest, that he meant nothing but his own amusement, and that of his companions. I doubt it. He knows little of the heart, who does not know that even in a sensible man it is flattered by every species of exaltation. But be it so, that he was in sport:—it was not humane, to say no worse of it, to sport with the ignorance of his friends, to mock their simplicity, to humour and acquiesce in their blind credulity. Besides, though a stock or a stone may be worshipped blameless, a baptized man may not. He knows what he does, and by suffering such honours to be paid to him, incurs the guilt of sacrilege[1].

We are glad that you are so happy in your church, in your society, and in all your connexions. I have not left myself room to say anything of the love we feel for you.

Yours, my dear friend, W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, Oct. 10, 1784.

I SEND you four quires of verse, which having sent, I shall dismiss from my thoughts, and think no more of, till I see them in print. I have not after all found time or industry enough to

[1] Having enjoyed, in the year 1772, the pleasure of conversing with this illustrious seaman, on board his own ship, the Resolution, I cannot pass the present letter without observing, that I am persuaded my friend Cowper utterly misapprehended the behaviour of Captain Cook, in the affair alluded to. From the little personal acquaintance, which I had myself with this humane and truly Christian navigator, and from the whole tenor of his life, I cannot believe it possible for him to have acted, under any circumstances, with such impious arrogance, as might appear offensive in the eyes of the Almighty.—*Hayley.*

give the last hand to the points. I believe, however, they are not very erroneous, though in so long a work, and in a work that requires nicety in this particular, some inaccuracies will escape. Where you find any, you will oblige me by correcting them.

In some passages, especially in the second book, you will observe me very satirical. Writing on such subjects I could not be otherwise. I can write nothing without aiming at least at usefulness: it were beneath my years to do it, and still more dishonourable to my religion. I know that a reformation of such abuses as I have censured is not to be expected from the efforts of a poet; but to contemplate the world, its follies, its vices, its indifference to duty, and its strenuous attachment to what is evil, and not to reprehend were to approve it. From this charge at least I shall be clear, for I have neither tacitly nor expressly flattered either its characters or its customs. I have paid one, and only one compliment, which was so justly due, that I did not know how to withhold it, especially having so fair an occasion;—I forget myself, there is another in the first book to Mr. Throckmorton,—but the compliment I mean is to Mr. Smith. It is however so managed, that nobody but himself can make the application, and you, to whom I disclose the secret; a delicacy on my part, which so much delicacy on his obliged me to the observance of.

What there is of a religious cast in the volume I have thrown towards the end of it, for two reasons; first, that I might not revolt the reader at his entrance,—and secondly, that my best impressions might be made last. Were I to write as many volumes as Lope de Vega, or Voltaire, not one of them would be without this tincture. If the world like it not, so much the worse for them. I make all the concessions I can, that I may please them, but I will not please them at the expense of conscience.

My descriptions are all from nature: not one of them second-handed. My delineations of the heart are from my own experience: not one of them borrowed from books, or in the least degree conjectural. In my numbers, which I have varied as much as I could, (for blank verse without variety of numbers is no better than bladder and string,) I have imitated *nobody*, though sometimes perhaps there may be an apparent *resemblance*; because at the same time that I would not imitate, I have not affectedly differed.

If the work cannot boast a regular plan, (in which respect however I do not think it altogether indefensible,) it may yet boast, that the reflections are naturally suggested always by the preceding passage, and that except the fifth book, which is rather of a political aspect, the whole has one tendency; to discountenance the modern enthusiasm after a London life, and to recommend rural ease and leisure, as friendly to the cause of piety and virtue.

If it pleases you I shall be happy, and collect from your pleasure in it an omen of its general acceptance.

Yours my dear friend, W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, Oct. 20, 1784.

YOUR letter has relieved me from some anxiety, and given me a good deal of positive pleasure. I have faith in your judgement, and an implicit confidence in the sincerity of your approbation. The writing of so long a poem is a serious business; and the author must know little of his own heart, who does not in some degree suspect himself of partiality to his own production; and who is he that would not be mortified by the discovery, that he had written five thousand lines in vain? The poem however which you have in hand will not of itself make a volume so large as the last, or as a bookseller would wish. I say this, because when I had sent Johnson five thousand verses, he applied for a thousand more. Two years since I began a piece which grew to the length of two hundred, and there stopped. I have lately resumed it, and (I believe) shall finish it. But the subject is fruitful, and will not be comprised in a smaller compass than seven or eight hundred verses. It turns on the question, whether an education at school or at home be preferable, and I shall give the preference to the latter. I mean that it shall pursue the track of the former,——that is to say, that it shall visit Stock in its way to publication. My design also is to inscribe it to you. But you must see it first; and if, after having seen it, you should have any objection, though it should be no bigger than the tittle of an *i*, I will deny myself that pleasure, and find no fault with your refusal. I have not been without thoughts of adding John Gilpin at the tail of all. He has made a good deal of noise in the world, and perhaps it may not be amiss to show, that though I write generally with a serious intention, I know how

to be occasionally merry. The Critical Reviewers charged me with an attempt at humour. John having been more celebrated upon the score of humour than most pieces that have appeared in modern days, may serve to exonerate me from the imputation: but in this article I am entirely under your judgement, and mean to be set down by it. All these together will make an octavo like the last. I should have told you, that the piece which now employs me, is in rhyme. I do not intend to write any more blank. It is more difficult than rhyme, and not so amusing in the composition. If, when you make the offer of my book to Johnson, he should stroke his chin, and look up to the ceiling and cry—"Humph!"—anticipate him (I beseech you) at once, by saying—"that you know I should be sorry that he should undertake for me to his own disadvantage, or that my volume should be in any degree pressed upon him. I make him the offer merely because I think he would have reason to complain of me, if I did not."—But that punctilio once satisfied, it is a matter of indifference to me what publisher sends me forth. If Longman should have difficulties, which is the more probable, as I understand from you that he does not in these cases see with his own eyes, but will consult a brother poet, take no pains to conquer them. The idea of being hawked about, and especially of your being the hawker, is insupportable. Nichols (I have heard) is the most learned printer of the present day. He may be a man of taste as well as of learning; and I suppose that you would not want a gentleman usher to introduce you. He prints the Gentleman's Magazine, and may serve us, if the others should decline; if not, give yourself no farther trouble about the matter. I may possibly envy authors, who can afford to publish at their own expense, and in that case should write no more. But the mortification would not break my heart.

I proceed to your corrections, for which I most unaffectedly thank you, adverting to them in their order.

Page 140.—Truth generally, without the article *the*, would not be sufficiently defined. There are many sorts of truth, philosophical, mathematical, moral, &c.; and a reader, not much accustomed to hear of religious or scriptural truth, might possibly, and indeed easily doubt what truth was particularly intended. I acknowledge that *grace*, in my use of the word, does not often occur in poetry. So neither does the subject which I handle. Every subject has its own terms, and

religious ones take theirs with most propriety from the Scripture: thence I take the word *grace*. The sarcastic use of it in the mouths of infidels I admit, but not their authority to proscribe it, especially as God's favour in the abstract has no other word, in all our language, by which it can be expressed.

Page 150.—*Impress the mind faintly, or not at all.*—I prefer this line, because of the interrupted run of it, having always observed that a little unevenness of this sort, in a long work, has a good effect,—used, I mean, sparingly, and with discretion.

Page 127.—This should have been noted first, but was overlooked.

My sentiments on the subject of Charles's decollation are peculiar; at least I believe they are so. I think it was a good deed, but ill done; that his life was forfeited, but taken away upon wrong motives. But my notions being peculiar are for that reason better suppressed, and I am indebted to you for the hint. Be pleased therefore to alter for me thus, with the difference of only one word from the alteration proposed by you,—

> We too are friends to royalty. We love
> The king who loves the law, respects his bounds,
> And reigns content within them.

You observed probably, in your second reading, that I allow the life of an animal to be fairly taken away, when it interferes either with the interest or convenience of man. Consequently snails, and all reptiles that spoil our crops, either of fruit, or grain, may be destroyed, if we can catch them. It gives me real pleasure, that Mrs. Unwin so readily understood me. Blank verse, by the unusual arrangement of the words, and by the frequent infusion of one line into another, not less than by the style, which requires a kind of tragical magnificence, cannot be chargeable with much obscurity,—must rather be singularly perspicuous,—to be so easily comprehended. It is my labour, and my principal one, to be as clear as possible. You do not mistake me, when you suppose that I have great respect for the virtue that flies temptation. It is that sort of prowess which the whole strain of Scripture calls upon us to manifest, when assailed by sensual evil. Interior mischiefs must be grappled with. There is no flight from them. But solicitations to sin, that address themselves to our bodily senses, are, I believe, seldom conquered in any other way.

In the introduction to the art of cucumber-raising, in the third book, I might beg you to substitute gnats for fleas. I need not tell you why.

Your mother also has had a letter from Mrs. Powley, in which she gives a particular account of her illness, and of the consolation she received in the course of it. It was equally refreshing to your mother, who, upon the strength of such pleasing evidence of her interest in a better world, could have made a cheerful surrender of her into the hands of her heavenly Father, had he seen good to take her.

We have to trouble you yet once again in the marketing way. I want a yard of green satin, to front a winter under waistcoat, and your mother a pound of prepared hartshorn. Being tolerably honest folks, it is probable that we shall some time or other pay you all our debts. These and the cream-pot may all come together by the waggon.

I can easily see that you may have very reasonable objections to my dedicatory proposal. You are a clergyman, and I have banged your order. You are a child of *Alma Mater*, and I have banged her too. Lay yourself therefore under no constraints that I do not lay you under, but consider yourself as perfectly free.

With our best love to you all, I bid you heartily farewell. I am tired of this endless scribblement. Adieu!

Yours, W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Oct. 30, 1784.

I ACCEDE most readily to the justness of your remark on the subject of the truly Roman heroism of the Sandwich islanders. Proofs of such prowess I believe are seldom exhibited by a people who have attained to a high degree of civilization. Refinement and profligacy of principle are too nearly allied, to admit of any thing so noble; and I question whether any instances of faithful friendship, like that which so much affected you in the behaviour of the poor savage, were produced even by the Romans themselves, in the latter days of the empire. They *had* been a nation whose virtues it is impossible not to wonder at. But Greece, which was to them, what France is to us, a Pandora's box of mischief, reduced them to her own standard, and they naturally soon sunk still lower. Religion in this case seems pretty much out of the question. To the

production of such heroism, undebauched nature herself is equal. When Italy was a land of heroes, she knew no more of the true God than her cicisbèos and her fiddlers know now; and indeed it seems a matter of indifference, whether a man be born under a truth which does not influence him, or under the actual influence of a lie: or if there be any difference between the two cases, it seems to be rather in favour of the latter; for a false persuasion, (such as the Mahometan for instance,) may animate the courage, and furnish motives for the contempt of death, while despisers of the true religion are punished for their folly by being abandoned to the last degrees of depravity. Accordingly we see a Sandwich islander sacrificing himself to his dead friend, and our Christian seamen and mariners, instead of being impressed by a sense of his generosity, butchering him with a persevering cruelty that will disgrace them for ever; for he was a defenceless, unresisting enemy, who meant nothing more than to gratify his love for the deceased. To slay him in such circumstances was to murder him, and with every aggravation of the crime that can be imagined.

I am now reading a book which you have never read, and will probably never read—Knox's Essays. Perhaps I should premise, that I am driven to such reading by the want of books that would please me better, neither having any, nor the means of procuring any. I am not sorry, however, that I have met with him; though when I have allowed him the praise of being a sensible man, and in *his* way a good one, I have allowed him all that I can afford. Neither his style pleases me, which is sometimes insufferably dry and hard, and sometimes ornamented even to an Harveian tawdriness; nor his manner, which is never lively without being the worse for it; so unhappy is he in his attempts at character and narration. But writing chiefly on the manners, vices, and follies of the modern day, to me he is at least so far useful, as that he gives me information upon points concerning which I neither *can* nor *would* be informed except by hearsay. Of such information, however, I have need, being a writer upon those subjects myself, and a satirical writer too. It is fit, therefore, in order that I may find fault in the right place, that I should know where fault may properly be found.

I am again at Johnson's in the shape of a poem in blank verse, consisting of six books, and called the Task. I began it

about this time twelvemonth, and writing sometimes an hour in a day, sometimes half a one, and sometimes two hours, have lately finished it. I mentioned it not sooner, because almost to the last I was doubtful whether I should ever bring it to a conclusion, working often in such distress of mind, as, while it spurred me to the work, at the same time threatened to disqualify me for it. My bookseller I suppose will be as tardy as before. I do not expect to be born into the world till the month of March, when I and the crocuses shall peep together. You may assure yourself that I shall take my first opportunity to wait on you. I mean likewise to gratify myself by obtruding my Muse upon Mr. Bacon.

Adieu, my dear friend! we are well, and love you.

Yours, and Mrs. Newton's, W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Nov. 1, 1784.

WERE I to delay my answer, I must yet write without a frank at last, and may as well therefore write without one now, especially feeling, as I do, a desire to thank you for your friendly offices so well performed. I am glad for your sake, as well as for my own, that you succeeded in the first instance, and that the first trouble proved the last. I am willing too to consider Johnson's readiness to accept a second volume of mine, as an argument that at least he was no loser by the former; I collect from it some reasonable hope that the volume in question may not wrong him neither. My imagination tells me, (for I know you interest yourself in the success of my productions,) that your heart fluttered when you approached his door, and that it felt itself discharged of a burthen when you came out again. You did well to mention it at the Thorntons; they will now know that you do not pretend to a share in my confidence, whatever be the value of it, greater than you actually possess. I wrote to Mr. Newton by the last post, to inform him that I was gone to the press again. He will be surprised, and perhaps not pleased: but I think he cannot complain, for he keeps his own authorly secrets without participating them with me. I do not think myself in the least degree injured by his reserve; neither should I, were he to publish a whole library without *favouring* me with any previous notice of his intentions. In *these cases it* is no violation of the laws of friendship not to *communicate*, though there must be a friendship where the

communication is made. But many reasons may concur in disposing a writer to keep his work a secret, and none of them injurious to his friends. The influence of one I have felt myself, for which none of them would blame me,—I mean the desire of surprising agreeably. And if I have denied myself this pleasure in your instance, it was only to give myself a greater, by eradicating from your mind any little weeds of suspicion, that might still remain in it, that any man living is nearer to me than yourself. Had not this consideration forced up the lid of my strong box like a lever, it would have kept its contents with an inviolable closeness to the last; and the first news that either you or any of my friends would have had of the Task, they would have received from the public papers. But you know now, that neither as poet, nor as man, do I give to any man a precedence in my estimation at your expense. I am proceeding with my new work (which at present I feel myself much inclined to call by the name of Tirocinium) as fast as the Muse permits. It has reached the length of seven hundred lines, and will probably receive an addition of two or three hundred more. When you see Mr. Smith, perhaps you will not find it difficult to procure from him half a dozen franks, addressed to yourself, and dated the fifteenth of December, in which case, they will all go to the post filled with my lucubrations, on the evening of that day. I do not name an earlier, because I hate to be hurried; and Johnson cannot want it sooner than, thus managed, it will reach him.

I am not sorry that John Gilpin, though hitherto he has been nobody's child, is likely to be owned at last. Here and there I can give him a touch that I think will mend him, the language in some places not being quite so quaint and old-fashioned as it should be; and in one of the stanzas there is a false rhyme. When I have thus given the finishing stroke to his figure, I mean to grace him with two mottoes, a Greek and a Latin one, which, when the world shall see that I have only a little one of three words to the volume itself, and none to the books of which it consists, they will perhaps understand as a stricture upon that pompous display of literature, with which some authors take occasion to crowd their titles. Knox, in particular, who is a sensible man too, has not, I think, fewer than half a dozen to his Essays.

Adieu, W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM BULL.

MY GOOD FRIEND, Nov. 8, 1784.

THE Task, as you know, is gone to the press: since it went I have been employed in writing another poem, which I am now transcribing, and which, in a short time, I design shall follow. It is intituled, Tirocinium, or a Review of Schools: the business and purpose of it are, to censure the want of discipline, and the scandalous inattention to morals, that obtain in them, especially in the largest; and to recommend private tuition as a mode of education preferable on all accounts; to call upon fathers to become tutors of their own sons, where that is practicable; to take home a domestic tutor where it is not; and if neither can be done, to place them under the care of such a man as he to whom I am writing; some rural parson, whose attention is limited to a few.

Now what want I?—A motto. I have taken mottoes from Virgil and Horace till I begin to fear lest the world should discover (what indeed is the case) that I have no other authors of the Roman class. Find me one therefore in any of your multitudinous volumes, no matter whether it be taken from Burgersdicius, Bogtrottius or Puddengulpius; the more recondite the better, the world will suppose that at least I am familiar with the author whom I quote, and though the supposition will be an erroneous one, it will do them no harm, and me some good.

When you have found it, bring it with you, either to-morrow, Saturday, or Monday. One of those three days you and your son must dine with us. Choose, and let us know which you choose, in an answer by the bearer.

Yours, with our joint love to Mrs. Bull,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Nov. 1784.

To condole with you on the death of a mother aged eighty-seven would be absurd; rather, therefore, as is reasonable, I congratulate you on the almost singular felicity of having enjoyed the company of so amiable, and so near a relation so long. Your lot and mine in this respect have been very different, as indeed in almost every other. Your mother lived to see you rise, at least to see you comfortably established in the

world: mine, dying when I was six years old, did not live to see me sink in it. You may remember with pleasure, while you live, a blessing vouchsafed to you so long; and I, while I live, must regret a comfort of which I was deprived so early. I can truly say, that not a week passes, (perhaps I might with equal veracity say a day,) in which I do not think of her. Such was the impression her tenderness made upon me, though the opportunity she had for showing it was so short. But the ways of God are equal;—and when I reflect on the pangs she would have suffered, had she been a witness of all mine, I see more cause to rejoice than to mourn, that she was hidden in the grave so soon.

We have, as you say, lost a lively and sensible neighbour in Lady Austen, but we have been long accustomed to a state of retirement within one degree of solitude, and being naturally lovers of still life, can relapse into our former duality without being unhappy at the change. To me indeed a third is not necessary, while I can have the companion I have had these twenty years.

I am gone to the press again; a volume of mine will greet your hands some time either in the course of the winter or early in the spring. You will find it perhaps on the whole more entertaining than the former, as it treats a greater variety of subjects, and those, at least the most, of a sublunary kind. It will consist of a poem, in six books, called the Task. To which will be added another, which I finished yesterday, called, I believe, Tirocinium, on the subject of education.

You perceive that I have taken your advice, and given the pen no rest.

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, Nov. 20, 1784.

THE Tirocinium kisses your hands. I changed my mind about mottoes to John Gilpin. I feared that the world might not understand me; and then, instead of thinking me witty, they might have called me foolish. Tiro, too, in consideration of the subject, actually required a learned embellishment of that sort. You will observe that mine is learned indeed. My neighbour, Mr. Bull, furnished me with it, for I have no such writers as are pressed into my service for this purpose in all

my library; I had worn out Horace and Virgil before. N. B. He never saw a line of the poem.

I do not think that drinkers, gamesters, fornicators, lewd talkers, and profane jesters,—men, in short, of no principles either religious or moral,—(and such we know are the majority of those sent out by our Universities,) *can* be dishonoured by a comparison with any thing on this side Erebus. I do not, therefore, repent of my frogs.

When I first knew Cambridge, I know that Benet had a character: it was my father's principal inducement when he chose that college for my brother; a slight alteration therefore may be sufficient, and by substituting *was* for *is* the matter may be accommodated. As thus,

> He graced a college in which order yet
> *Was* sacred.

And indeed it stands so in the foul copy.

The following short drama will, I think, set the musical business in so clear a light that you will no longer doubt the propriety of the censure.

Scene opens, and discovers the Abbey filled with Hearers and Performers. An ANGEL *descends into the midst of them.*

Angel. What are you about?
Answer. Commemorating Handel.
Angel. What is commemoration?
Answer. A ceremony instituted in honour of him whom we commemorate.
Angel. But you sing anthems?
Answer. Yes, because he composed them
Angel. And Italian airs?
Answer. Yes, and for the same reason.
Angel. So then because Handel set anthems to music, you sing them in honour of Handel; and because he composed the music of Italian songs, you sing them in a church. Truly Handel is much obliged to you, but God is greatly dishonoured.

[*Exit* ANGEL, *and the music proceeds without further impediment.*

A letter arrived last night from Yorkshire, begun by Mrs. Powley, but finished by her husband. She has had a return of her nervous disorder, but the physician does not apprehend her to be in any danger. Her frame of mind is happy and spiritual, full of thankfulness, praise, and confidence.

I cannot immediately recollect the exsputory lines, and have *not leisure to* look for them.

The parcel, if you please, by the Diligence. Thanks.

Lady A. is neither returned nor returnable: she has taken a house at Bristol, and furnished it.

Adieu. Yours, WM. COWPER.

You will find also an epistle to Joseph Hill, Esq., which I wrote on Wednesday last; a tribute so due that I must have disgraced myself had I not paid it. He ever serves me in all that he can, though he has not seen me these twenty years.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Nov. 27, 1784.

ALL the interest that you take in my new publication, and all the pleas that you urge in behalf of your right to my confidence, the moment I had read your letter, struck me as so many proofs of your regard; of a friendship, in which distance and time make no abatement. But it is difficult to adjust opposite claims to the satisfaction of all parties. I have done my best, and must leave it to your candour to put a just interpretation upon all that has passed, and to give me credit for it, as a certain truth, that whatever seeming defects, in point of attention and attachment to you, my conduct on this occasion may have appeared to have been chargeable with, I am in reality as clear of all real ones as you would wish to find me.

I send you enclosed, in the first place, a copy of the advertisement to the reader, which accounts for my title, not otherwise easily accounted for;—secondly, what is called an argument, or a summary of the contents of each book, more circumstantial and diffuse by far than that which I have sent to the press. It will give you a pretty accurate acquaintance with my matter, though the tenons and mortises, by which the several passages are connected, and let into each other, cannot be explained in a syllabus;—and lastly, an extract, as you desired. The subject of it I am sure will please you; and as I have admitted into my description no images but what are scriptural, and have aimed as exactly as I could at the plain and simple sublimity of the scripture language, I have hopes the manner of it may please you too. As far as the numbers and diction are concerned, it may serve pretty well for a sample of the whole. But the subjects being so various, no single passage can *in all respects* be a specimen of the book at large.

My principal purpose is to allure the reader, by character, by scenery, by imagery, and such poetical embellishments, to the reading of what may profit him. Subordinately to this, to combat that predilection in favour of a metropolis, that beggars and exhausts the country, by evacuating it of all its principal inhabitants: and collaterally, and as far as is consistent with this double intention, to have a stroke at vice, vanity, and folly, wherever I find them. I have not spared the Universities. A letter which appeared in the General Evening Post of Saturday, said to have been received by a general officer, and by him sent to the press, as worthy of public notice, and which has all the appearance of authenticity, would alone justify the severest censure of those bodies, if any such justification were wanted. By way of supplement to what I have written on this subject, I have added a poem, called Tirocinium, which is in rhyme. It treats of the scandalous relaxation of discipline, that obtains in almost all schools universally, but especially in the largest, which are so negligent in the article of morals, that boys are debauched in general the moment they are capable of being so. It recommends the office of tutor to the father, where there is no real impediment; the expedient of a domestic tutor, where there is; and the disposal of boys into the hands of a respectable country clergyman, who limits his attention to two, in all cases where they cannot be conveniently educated at home. Mr. Unwin happily affording me an instance in point, the poem is inscribed to him. You will now I hope command your hunger to be patient, and be satisfied with the luncheon that I send, till dinner comes. That piecemeal perusal of the work, sheet by sheet, would be so disadvantageous to the work itself, and therefore so uncomfortable to me, that, I dare say, you will waive your desire of it. A poem, thus disjointed, cannot possibly be fit for any body's inspection but the author's.

Tully's rule—"*Nulla dies sine lineâ*"—will make a volume in less time than one would suppose. I adhered to it so rigidly, that though more than once I found three lines as many as I had time to compass, still I wrote; and finding occasionally, and as it might happen, a more fluent vein, the abundance of one day made me amends for the barrenness of another. But *I do not* mean to write blank verse again. Not having the *music of rhyme*, it requires so close an attention to the pause

and the cadence, and such a peculiar mode of expression, as render it, to me at least, the most difficult species of poetry that I have ever meddled with.

I am obliged to you, and to Mr. Bacon, for your kind remembrance of me when you meet. No artist can excel as he does, without the finest feelings; and every man that has the finest feelings is, and must be, amiable.

Adieu, my dear friend!

Affectionately yours, W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, 1784.

THE slice which, you observe, has been taken from the top of the sheet, it lost before I began to write; but being a part of the paper which is seldom used, I thought it would be pity to discard, or to degrade to meaner purposes, the fair and ample remnant, on account of so immaterial a defect. I therefore have destined it to be the vehicle of a letter, which you will accept as entire, though a lawyer perhaps would, without much difficulty, prove it to be but a fragment. The best recompense I can make you for writing without a frank, is to propose it to you to take your revenge by returning an answer under the same predicament; and the best reason I can give for doing it is the occasion following. In my last I recommended it to you to procure franks for the conveyance of Tirocinium, dated on a day therein mentioned, and the earliest, which at that time I could venture to appoint. It has happened, however, that the poem is finished a month sooner than I expected, and two-thirds of it are at this moment fairly transcribed; an accident to which the riders of a Parnassian steed are liable, who never know, before they mount him, at what rate he will choose to travel. If he be indisposed to despatch, it is impossible to accelerate his pace; if otherwise, equally impossible to stop him. Therefore my errand to you at this time is to cancel the former assignation, and to inform you that by whatever means you please, and as soon as you please, the piece in question will be ready to attend you; for without exerting any extraordinary diligence, I shall have completed the transcript in a week.

The critics will never know that four lines of it were composed while I had an ounce and a half of ipecacuanha upon

my stomach, and a wooden vessel called a pail between my knees; and that in the very article, ——in short, that I was delivered of the emetic and the verses in the same moment. Knew they this, they would at least allow me to be a poet of singular industry, and confess that I lose no time. I have heard of poets, who have found catharitics of sovereign use, when they had occasion to be particularly brilliant. Dryden always used them, and in commemoration of it, Bayes in the Rehearsal is made to inform the audience, that in a poetical emergency he always had recourse to stewed prunes. But I am the only poet who has dared to reverse the prescription, and whose enterprise, having succeeded to admiration, warrants him to recommend an emetic to all future bards, as the most infallible means of producing a fluent and easy versification.

Your mother is well, and desires me to give her love to you. Nothing more has passed between us and the Throckmortons, except that lately, when they drew the river, they presented us with a fine jack. The ways are now growing dirty, and our pilgrimages to Weston will of course become less frequent. It is not likely therefore, at present, that our acquaintance with them should increase.

My love to all your family. Adieu! W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Nov. 29, 1784.

I AM happy that you are pleased, and accept it as an earnest that I shall not, at least, disgust the public. For though I know your partiality to me, I know at the same time with what laudable tenderness you feel for your own reputation, and that for the sake of that most delicate part of your property, though you would not criticise me with an unfriendly and undue severity, you would however beware of being satisfied too hastily, and with no warrantable cause for being so. I called you the tutor of your two sons, in contemplation of the certainty of that event, and accounting it no violation of truth to assert *that* as true to-day which will be so to-morrow. It is a fact in suspense, not in fiction.

My principal errand to you now is to give you information on the following subject: The moment Mr. Newton knew, (and I took care that he should learn it first from me,) that I *communicated* to you what I had concealed from him, and that

you were my authorship's go-between with Johnson on this occasion, he sent me a most friendly letter indeed, but one in every line of which I could hear the soft murmur of something like mortification, that could not be entirely suppressed. It contained nothing, however, that you yourself would have blamed, or that I had not every reason to consider as evidence of his regard to me. He concluded the subject with desiring to know something of my plan, to be favoured with an extract by way of specimen, or, (which he should like better still,) with wishing me to order Johnson to send him a proof as fast as they were printed off. Determining not to accede to this last request for many reasons, (but especially because I would no more show my poem piecemeal, than I would my house if I had one; the merits of the structure, in either case, being equally liable to suffer by such a partial view of it,) I have endeavoured to compromise the difference between us, and to satisfy him without disgracing myself. The proof-sheets I have absolutely, though civilly refused. But I have sent him a copy of the arguments of each book, more dilated and circumstantial than those inserted in the work; and to these I have added an extract as he desired; selecting, as most suited to his taste,—The view of the restoration of all things—which you recollect to have seen near the end of the last book. I hold it necessary to tell you this, lest, if you should call upon him, he should startle you by discovering a degree of information upon the subject, which you could not otherwise know how to reconcile, or to account for.

You have executed your commissions *à merveille*. We not only approve, but admire. No apology was wanting for the balance struck at the bottom, which we accounted rather a beauty than a deformity. Pardon a poor poet, who cannot speak even of pounds, shillings, and pence, but in his own way.

I have read Lunardi with pleasure. He is a lively, sensible young fellow, and I suppose a very favourable sample of the Italians. When I look at his picture, I can fancy that I see in him that good sense and courage that no doubt were legible in the face of a young Roman two thousand years ago.

Your affectionate. W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Dec. 4, 1784.

You have my hearty thanks for a very good barrel of oysters; which necessary acknowledgment once made, I might perhaps show more kindness by cutting short an epistle, than by continuing one, in which you are not likely to find your account, either in the way of information or amusement. The season of the year, indeed, is not very friendly to such communications. A damp atmosphere and a sunless sky will have their effect upon the spirits; and when the spirits are checked, farewell to all hope of being good company, either by letter or otherwise. I envy those happy voyagers, who, with so much ease, ascend to regions unsullied with a cloud, and date their epistles from an extra-mundane situation. No wonder if they outshine us who poke about in the dark below, in the vivacity of their sallies, as much as they soar above us in their excursions. Not but that I should be very sorry to go to the clouds for wit: on the contrary, I am satisfied that I discover more by continuing where I am. Every man to his business. Their vocation is, to see fine prospects, and to make pithy observations upon the world below; such as these, for instance: that the earth, beheld from a height that one trembles to think of, has the appearance of a circular plain; that England is a very rich and cultivated country, in which every man's property is ascertained by the hedges that intersect the lands; and that London and Westminster, seen from the neighbourhood of the moon, make but an insignificant figure. I admit the utility of these remarks; but in the mean time, as I say, *chacun à son goût;* and mine is rather to creep than fly; and to carry with me, if possible, an unbroken neck to the grave.

I remain, as ever,
Your affectionate WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Dec. 11, 1784.

Having imitated no man, I may reasonably hope that I shall not incur the disadvantage of a comparison with my betters. Milton's manner was peculiar. So is Thomson's. He that should write like either of them, would, in my judgement, deserve the name of a copyist, but not of a poet. A judicious

and sensible reader therefore, like yourself, will not say that my manner is not good, because it does not resemble theirs, but will rather consider what it is in itself. Blank verse is susceptible of a much greater diversification of manner, than verse in rhyme: and why the modern writers of it have all thought proper to cast their numbers alike, I know not. Certainly it was not necessity that compelled them to it. I flatter myself however that I have avoided that sameness with others, which would entitle me to nothing but a share in one common oblivion with them all. It is possible that, as the reviewer of my former volume found cause to say that he knew not to what class of writers to refer me, the reviewer of this, whosoever he shall be, may see occasion to remark the same singularity. At any rate, though as little apt to be sanguine as most men, and more prone to fear and despond, than to overrate my own productions, I am persuaded that I shall not forfeit any thing by this volume that I gained by the last.

As to the title, I take it to be the best that is to be had. It is not possible that a book, including such a variety of subjects, and in which no particular one is predominant, should find a title adapted to them all. In such a case, it seemed almost necessary to accommodate the name to the incident that gave birth to the poem; nor does it appear to me, that because I performed more than my task, therefore the Task is not a suitable title. A house would still be a house, though the builder of it should make it ten times as big as he at first intended. I might indeed, following the example of the Sunday newsmonger, call it the Olio. But I should do myself wrong; for though it have much variety, it has, I trust, no confusion.

For the same reason none of the interior titles apply themselves to the contents at large of that book to which they belong. They are, every one of them, taken either from the leading, (I should say the introductory,) passage of that particular book, or from that which makes the most conspicuous figure in it. Had I set off with a design to write upon a gridiron, and had I actually written near two hundred lines upon that utensil, as I have upon the Sofa, the Gridiron should have been my title. But the Sofa being, as I may say, the starting-post from which I addressed myself to the long race that I soon conceived a design to run, it acquired a just pre-eminence

in my account, and was very worthily advanced to the titular honour it enjoys, its right being at least so far a good one, that no word in the language could pretend a better.

The Time-piece appears to me, (though by some accident the import of that title has escaped you,) to have a degree of propriety beyond the most of them. The book to which it belongs is intended to strike the hour that gives notice of approaching judgement, and dealing pretty largely in the *signs* of the *times*, seems to be denominated, as it is, with a sufficient degree of accommodation to the subject.

As to the word *worm*, it is the very appellation which Milton himself, in a certain passage of the Paradise Lost, gives to the serpent. Not having the book at hand, I cannot now refer to it; but I am sure of the fact. I am mistaken, too, if Shakspeare's Cleopatra do not call the asp, by which she thought fit to destroy herself, by the same name. But not having read the play these five-and-twenty years, I will not affirm it. They are, however, without all doubt, convertible terms. A worm is a small serpent, and a serpent is a large worm. And when an epithet significant of the most terrible species of those creatures is adjoined, the idea is surely sufficiently ascertained. No animal of the vermicular or serpentine kind is crested, but the most formidable of all.

We do not often see, or rather feel, so severe a frost before Christmas. Unexpected, at least by me, it had like to have been too much for my greenhouse, my myrtles having found themselves yesterday morning in an atmosphere so cold that the mercury was fallen eight degrees below the freezing point.

We are truly sorry for Mrs. Newton's indisposition, and shall be glad to hear of her recovery. We are most liable to colds at this season, and at this season a cold is most difficult to cure.

Be pleased to remember us to the young ladies, and to all under your roof and elsewhere, who are mindful of us. And believe me,

Your affectionate. WM. COWPER.

Your letters are gone to their address. The oysters were very good.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Dec. 18, 1784.

I CONDOLE with you, that you had the trouble to ascend St. Paul's in vain, but at the same time congratulate you, that you escaped an ague. I should be very well pleased to have a fair prospect of a balloon under sail, with a philosopher or two on board, but at the same time should be very sorry to expose myself, for any length of time, to the rigour of the upper regions, at this season, for the sake of it. The travellers themselves, I suppose, are secured from all injuries of the weather by that fervency of spirit and agitation of mind, which must needs accompany them in their flight; advantages, which the more composed and phlegmatic spectator is not equally possessed of.

The inscription of the poem is more your own affair than any other person's. You have therefore an undoubted right to fashion it to your mind, nor have I the least objection to the slight alteration that you have made in it. I inserted what you have erased for a reason that was perhaps rather chimerical than solid. I feared, however, that the Reviewers, or some of my very sagacious readers, not more merciful than they, might suspect that there was a secret design in the wind; and that author and friend had consulted in what manner author might best introduce friend to public notice, as a clergyman every way qualified to entertain a pupil or two, if peradventure any gentleman of fortune were in want of a tutor for his children. I therefore added the words—"And of his two sons only"—by way of insinuating, that you are perfectly satisfied with your present charge, and that you do not wish for more; thus meaning to obviate an illiberal construction, which we are both of us incapable of deserving. But the same caution not having appeared to you as necessary, I am very willing and ready to suppose that it is not so.

I intended in my last to have given you my reasons for the compliment I have paid Bishop Bagot, lest, knowing that I have no personal connexion with him, you should suspect me of having done it rather too much at a venture. In the first place, then, I wished the world to know that I have no objection to a bishop, *quiá* bishop. In the second place, the brothers were all *five my* schoolfellows, and very amiable and

valuable boys they were. Thirdly, Lewis, the bishop, had been rudely and coarsely treated in the Monthly Review, on account of a sermon, which appeared to me, when I read their extract from it, to deserve the highest commendations, as exhibiting explicit proof both of his good sense, and his unfeigned piety. For these causes me thereunto moving, I felt myself happy in an opportunity to do public honour to a worthy man, who had been publicly traduced; and indeed the reviewers themselves have since repented of their aspersions, and have travelled not a little out of their way in order to retract them, having taken occasion by the sermon preached at the bishop's visitation at Norwich, to say every thing handsome of his lordship, who, whatever might be the merit of the discourse, in that instance, at least, could himself lay claim to no other than that of being a hearer.

Since I wrote, I have had a letter from Mr. Newton, that did not please me, and returned an answer to it, that possibly may not have pleased him. His was fretful and peevish; and mine, if not chargeable with exactly the same qualities, was however dry and unsavoury enough. We shall come together again soon, I suppose, upon as amicable terms as usual: but at present he is in a state of mortification. He would have been pleased, had the book passed out of his hands into yours, or even out of yours into his, so that he had previously had opportunity to advise a measure which I pursued without his recommendation, and had seen the poems in manuscript. But my design was to pay you a whole compliment, and I have done it. If he says more on the subject, I shall speak freely, and perhaps please him less than I have done already.

We wished to have thanked you sooner for three fine cod, with shrimps and oysters, all excellent in their way; but knew not where a letter might find you.

Yours with love to all, W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Christmas eve, 1784.

I AM neither Mede or Persian; neither am I the son of any such, but was born at Great Berkhampstead, in Hertfordshire, and yet I can neither find a new title for my book, nor please myself with any addition to the old one. I am, however, willing to hope that, when the volume shall cast itself at your

feet, you will be in some measure reconciled to the name it bears, especially when you shall find it justified both by the exordium of the poem, and by the conclusion. But enough, as you say with great truth, of a subject very unworthy of so much consideration.

Had I heard the anecdotes of poor dying Daniel, that would have bid fair to deserve your attention, I should have sent them. The little that he is reported to have uttered of a spiritual import, was not very striking. That little, however, I can give you upon good authority. His brother asking him how he found himself; he replied, "I am very composed, and think that I may safely believe myself entitled to a portion." The world has had much to say in his praise, and both prose and verse have been employed to celebrate him in the Northampton Mercury. But Christians, I suppose, have judged it best to be silent. If he ever drank at the fountain of life, he certainly drank also, and often too freely, of certain other streams, which are not to be bought without money and without price. He had virtues that dazzled the natural eye, and failings that shocked the spiritual one. But *iste dies indicabit.*

* * * * * *

We are agreeably disappointed in Hannah: we feared that through a natural deficiency of understanding, we should always find her an encumbrance; but she has suddenly brightened up, and being put into such little offices as she is capable of, executes them with an expertness and alacrity at which we wonder. She has an exceeding good temper, and bids fair to discover more sense than we suspected would ever fall to her lot. Stephen Stow has behaved himself so well on board the ballast lighter, that he has been discharged before his time expired, and is now at Olney.

Mrs. Powley is less frequently visited with her fits, and they are less violent. She is still much comforted.

Mrs. Unwin intended you a present of a rope,—not of hemp, but of onions; but unfortunately forgot. Many thanks to Mrs. Newton for her care of the stockings. A little boy of Molly Thompson's stepping over the threshold for a certain occasion, fell and broke his leg. Say not that I send you no news.

Yours, my dear friend, with our love to you all,

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Jan. 5, 1785.

* * * * *

I have observed, and you must have had occasion to observe it oftener than I, that when a man, who once seemed to be a Christian, has put off that character, and resumed his old one, he loses, together with the grace which he seemed to possess, the most amiable part of the character that he resumes. The best features of his natural face seem to be struck out, that, after having worn religion only as a handsome mask, he may make a more disgusting appearance than he did before he assumed it.

According to your request, I subjoin my Epitaph on Dr. Johnson; at least I mean to do it, if a drum, which at this moment announces the arrival of a giant in the town, will give me leave. I have not yet sent the copy to the Magazine.

EPITAPH ON DR. JOHNSON.

Here Johnson lies—a sage, by all allow'd,
Whom to have bred may well make England proud;
Whose prose was eloquence by wisdom taught,
The graceful vehicle of virtuous thought;
Whose verse may claim, grave, masculine, and strong,
Superior praise to the mere poet's song;
Who many a noble gift from Heaven possessed
And faith at last—alone worth all the rest.
Oh man immortal, by a double prize,
On earth by fame, by favour in the skies.

Mr. Page has quitted the country, having neither left admirers behind him, nor taken any with him; unless perhaps his wife be one, which admits some doubt. He quarrelled with most of his acquaintance, and the rest grew sick of him. Even his friend Maurice Smith was of this number. He even quarrelled with his auctioneer in the midst of the sale of his goods, and would not permit him to proceed, finishing that matter himself. He took leave of his audience in these words; "And now let us pray for your wicked Vicar." Yours,

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, Olney, Jan. 15, 1785.

YOUR letters are always welcome. You can always either find *something to* say, or can amuse me and yourself with a sociable

d friendly way of saying nothing. I never found that a let-
r was the more easily written, because the writing of it had
en long delayed. On the contrary, experience has taught me
answer soon, that I may do it without difficulty. It is in
in to wait for an accumulation of materials in a situation
ch as yours and mine, productive of few events. At the end
our expectations we shall find ourselves as poor as at the
ginning.

I can hardly tell you with any certainty of information upon
hat terms Mr. Newton and I may be supposed to stand at
esent. A month, I believe, has passed since I heard from
m. But my *friseur* having been in London in the course of
is week, whence he returned last night, and having called at
oxton, brought me his love, and an excuse for his silence,
hich (he said) had been occasioned by the frequency of his
eachings at this season. He was not pleased that my manu-
ript was not first transmitted to him, and I have cause to sus-
ct that he was even mortified at being informed, that a cer-
in inscribed poem was not inscribed to himself. But we shall
mble together again, as people that have an affection for each
her at bottom, notwithstanding now and then a slight disa-
eement, always do.

I know not whether Mr. Smith has acted in consequence of
ur hint, or whether, not needing one, he transmitted to us
s bounty, before he had received it. He has, however, sent us
note for twenty pounds; with which we have performed won-
rs, in behalf of the ragged and the starved. He is a most ex-
aordinary young man, and though I shall probably never see
m, will always have a niche in the museum of my reverential
membrance.

The death of Dr. Johnson has set a thousand scribblers to
ork, and me among the rest. While I lay in bed, waiting till
could reasonably hope that the parlour might be ready for me,
invoked the Muse, and composed the following

EPITAPH.

Here Johnson lies—a sage, by all allow'd,
Whom to have bred, may well make England proud;
Whose prose was Eloquence, by Wisdom taught,
The graceful vehicle of virtuous thought;
Whose verse may claim grave, masculine, and strong,
Superior *praise to the* mere poet's song;

How many a noble gift from Heav'n possess'd,
And faith at last, alone worth all the rest.
O man, immortal by a double prize,
By fame on earth, by glory in the skies!

It is destined, I believe, to the Gentleman's Magazine, which I consider as a respectable repository for small matters, which, when entrusted to a newspaper, can expect but the duration of a day. But Nichols having at present a small piece of mine in his hands, not yet printed,—(it is called the Poplar Field, and I suppose you have it,)—I wait till his obstetrical aid has brought that to light, before I send him a new one. In his last he published my epitaph upon Tiney: which, I likewise imagine, has been long in your collection.

Not a word yet from Johnson. I am easy, however, upon that subject, being assured that so long as his own interest is at stake, he will not want a monitor to remind him of the proper time to publish.

You and your family have our sincere love. Forget not to present my respectful compliments to Miss Unwin, and, if you have not done it already, thank her on my part for the very agreeable narrative of Lunardi. He is a young man, I presume, of great good sense and spirit, (his letters, at least, and his enterprising turn, bespeak him such,) a man qualified to shine not only among the stars, but in the more useful, though humbler sphere of terrestrial occupation.

I have been crossing the channel in a balloon, ever since I read of that achievement by Blanchard. I have an insatiable thirst to know the philosophical reason, why his vehicle had like to have fallen into the sea, when, for aught that appears, the gas was not at all exhausted. Did not the extreme cold condense the inflammable air, and cause the globe to collapse? Tell me, and be my Apollo for ever!

Affectionately yours, W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Jan. 22, 1785.

THE departure of the long frost, by which we were pinched and squeezed together for three weeks, is a most agreeable circumstance. The weather is now (to speak poetically) genial and *jocund*; and the appearance of the sun, after so tedious an *eclipse, peculiarly* welcome. For were it not that I have a

gravel-walk about sixty yards long, where I take my daily exercise, I should be obliged to look at a fine day through the window, without any other enjoyment of it;—a country rendered impassable by frost, that has been at last resolved into rottenness, keeps me so close a prisoner. Long live the inventors and improvers of balloons! It is always clear overhead, and by and by we shall use no other road.

How will the Parliament employ themselves when they meet? —to any purpose, or to none, or only to a bad one? They are utterly out of my favour. I despair of them altogether. Will they pass an act for the cultivation of the royal wildernesses? Will they make effectual provision for a northern fishery? Will they establish a new sinking-fund, that shall infallibly pay off the national debt? I say nothing about a more equal representation, because, unless they bestow upon private gentlemen of no property a privilege of voting, I stand no chance of ever being represented myself. Will they achieve all these wonders, or none of them? And shall I derive no other advantage from the great Witena-Gemot of the nation, than merely to read their debates, for twenty folios of which I would not give one farthing? Yours, my dear friend, WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Feb. 7, 1785.

We live in a state of such uninterrupted retirement, in which incidents worthy to be recorded occur so seldom, that I always sit down to write with a discouraging conviction that I have nothing to say. The event commonly justifies the presage. For when I have filled my sheet, I find that I have said nothing. Be it known to you, however, that I may now at least communicate a piece of intelligence to which you will not be altogether indifferent, that I have received, and revised, and returned to Johnson, the two first proof sheets of my new publication. The business was dispatched indeed a fortnight ago, since when I have heard from him no further. From such a beginning, however, I venture to prognosticate the progress, and in due time the conclusion of the matter.

In the last Gentleman's Magazine my Poplar Field appears. I have accordingly sent up two pieces more,—a Latin translation of it, which you have never seen, and another on a Rosebud, the neck of which I inadvertently broke, which, whether

you have seen or not, I know not. As fast as Nichols print off the poems I send him, I send him new ones. My remi tance usually consists of two; and he publishes one of them a time. I may indeed furnish him at this rate, without puttin myself to any great inconvenience. For my last supply wa transmitted to him in August and is but now exhausted.

I communicate the following anecdote at your mother' instance, who will suffer no part of my praise to be sunk i oblivion. A certain Lord Archibald Hamilton has hired th house of Mr. Small at Clifton, in our neighbourhood, for hunting seat. There he lives at present with his wife an daughter. They are an exemplary family in some respect and I believe an amiable one in all. The Rev. Mr. Jones, th curate of that parish, who often dines with them by invitatio on a Sunday, recommended my volume to their reading; an his lordship, after having perused a part of it, expressed to th said Mr. Jones an ardent desire to be acquainted with th author, from motives which my great modesty will not suffe me to particularize. Mr. Jones, however, like a wise man, in formed his lordship, that for certain special reasons and cause I had declined going into company for many years, and tha therefore he must not hope for my acquaintance. His lord ship most civilly subjoined that he was very sorry for it.

"And is that all?" say you. Now, were I to hear you sa so, I should look foolish and say—"Yes."—But having yo at a distance, I snap my fingers at you, and say—"No, that i not all."—Mr. Teedon, who favours us now and then with hi company in an evening, as usual, was not long since discours ing with that eloquence which is so peculiar to himself, on th many providential interpositions that had taken place in hi favour. "He had wished for many things (he said,) which at the time when he formed those wishes, seemed distant an improbable, some of them indeed impossible. Among othe wishes that he had indulged, one was, that he might be con nected with men of genius and ability;—and in my connexio with this worthy gentleman, (said, he, turning to me,) tha wish, I am sure, is amply gratified." You may suppose tha I felt the sweat gush out upon my forehead, when I heard thi speech; and if you do, you will not be at all mistaken. S much was I delighted with the delicacy of that incense.

Thus far I proceeded easily enough; and here I laid dow

my pen, and spent some minutes in recollection, endeavouring to find some subject, with which I might fill the little blank that remains. But none presents itself. Farewell therefore, and remember those who are mindful of you!

Present our love to all your comfortable fire-side, and believe me ever most affectionately yours, W. C.

They that read Greek with the accents would pronounce the ε in φιλεω, as an η. But I do not hold with that practice, though educated in it. I should therefore utter it just as I do the Latin word *filio*, taking the quantity for my guide.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Olney, Feb. 19, 1785.

I AM obliged to you for apprising me of the various occasions of delay to which your letters are liable. Furnished with such a key, I shall be able to account for any accidental tardiness, without supposing any thing worse than that you yourself have been interrupted, or that your messenger has not been punctual.

Mr. Teedon has just left us. He came to exhibit to us a specimen of his kinsman's skill in the art of bookbinding. The book on which he had exercised his ingenuity was your Life. You did not, indeed, make a very splendid appearance; but, considering that you were dressed by an untaught artificer, and that it was his first attempt, you had no cause to be dissatisfied. The young man has evidently the possession of talents, by which he might shine both for the benefit of others and for his own, did not his situation smother him. He can make a dulcimer, tune it, play upon it, and with common advantages would undoubtedly have been able to make an harpsichord. But, unfortunately, he lives where neither the one nor the other are at all in vogue. He can convert the shell of a cocoa-nut into a decent drinking-cup; but when he has done, he must either fill it at the pump, or use it merely as an ornament of his own mantle-tree. In like manner, he can bind a book; but if he would have books to bind, he must either make them or buy them, for we have few or no literati at Olney. Some men have talents with which they do mischief; and others have talents with which, if they do no mischief to others, at least they can do but little good to themselves. They are, however, always a blessing, unless by our own folly we make

them a curse; for if we cannot turn them to a lucrative account, they may however furnish us, at many a dull season, with the means of innocent amusement. Such is the use that Mr. Killingworth makes of his; and this evening we have, I think, made him happy, having furnished him with two octavo volumes, in which the principles and practice of all ingenious arts are inculcated and explained. I make little doubt that, by the half of it, he will in time be able to perform many feats for which he will never be one farthing the richer, but by which, nevertheless, himself and his kin will be much diverted.

How much better is he employed than a neighbour of ours has been for many years, whose sole occupation, although he too is naturally ingenious, has centred in filling his glass and emptying it. He is neither unknown nor much known to you, but you remember him by the name of Geary Ball. He is now languishing in a dropsy, and, in the prime of life, labouring under all the infirmities of age. He solaces himself, I am told, with the recollection of somewhat that passed in his experience many years ago, which, although it has been followed by no better fruits than will grow at an alehouse, he dignifies with the name of Conversion. Sows are so converted when they are washed, and give the same evidence of an unchanged nature by returning to the mire. Mr. Perry, whose daughter he married, often visits him, but declares that of all the insensibles he ever saw, poor Geary is the most completely stupid. So long as he was able to crawl into the street, his journey was to the Royal Oak and home again; and so punctual were we both, I in cleaning my teeth at my window, and he in drinking his dram at the same time, that I seldom failed to observe him. But both his legs are now blistered, and refuse to assist him in poisoning himself any longer.

Osborn, the Baptist, as Mr. Wilson informed me, had determined to pay William Penn an official visit as a deacon of the church, for the purpose of imparting to him the sentence of his expulsion, but meeting him accidentally in the street, and discerning both in his gait and in his features, indications of a temper that it might not be safe to irritate, abandoned his purpose for ever. These men both have wives, and neither of them believes the sin and folly of their husbands.

The winter returning upon us at this late season with re-

doubled severity, is an event unpleasant even to us who are well furnished with fuel, and seldom feel much of it, unless when we step into bed or get out of it; but how much more formidable to the poor! When ministers talk of resources, that word never fails to send my imagination into the mud-wall cottages of our poor at Olney. There I find assembled in one individual, the miseries of age, sickness, and the extremest penury. We have many such instances around us. The parish, perhaps, allow such a one a shilling a week; but, being numbed with cold, and crippled by disease, she cannot possibly earn herself another. Such persons, therefore, suffer all that famine can inflict upon them, only that they are not actually starved; a catastrophe which, to many of them, I suppose, would prove a happy release. One cause of all this misery is, the exorbitant taxation with which the country is encumbered; so that, to the poor, the few pence they are able to procure have almost lost their value. Yet the budget will be opened soon, and soon we shall hear of resources. But I could conduct the statesman, who rolls down to the House in a chariot as splendid as that of Phaeton, into scenes that, if he had any sensibility for the woes of others, would make him tremble at the mention of the word.—This, however, is not what I intended when I began this paragraph. I was going to observe, that of all the winters we have passed at Olney, and this is the seventeenth, the present has confined us most. Thrice, and but thrice, since the middle of October, have we escaped into the fields for a little fresh air, and a little change of motion. The last time, indeed, it was at some peril that we did it, Mrs. Unwin having slipped into a ditch, and, though I performed the part of an active 'squire upon the occasion, escaped out of it upon her hands and knees.

If the town afford any other news than I here send you, it has not reached me yet. I am in perfect health, at least of body, and Mrs. Unwin is tolerably well. Adieu! We remember you always, you and yours, with as much affection as you can desire; which being said, and said truly, leaves me quite at a loss for any other conclusion than that of

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Feb. 27, 1785.

I WRITE merely to inquire after your health, and with a sincere desire to hear that you are better. Horace somewhere advises his friend to give his client the slip, and come and spend the evening with him. I am not so inconsiderate as to recommend the same measure to you, because we are not such very near neighbours as a trip of that sort requires that we should be. But I do verily wish that you would favour me with just five minutes of the time that properly belongs to your clients, and place it to my account. Employ it, I mean, in telling me that you are better at least, if not recovered.

I have been pretty much indisposed myself since I wrote last; but, except in point of strength, am now as well as before. My disorder was what is commonly called and best understood by the name of a thorough cold; which, being interpreted, no doubt you will know, signifies shiverings, aches, burnings, lassitude, together with many other ills that flesh is heir to. James's powder is my nostrum on all such occasions, and never fails. Yours, my dear friend,

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, Feb. 28, 1785.

PERMIT me to say that I think you dealt more generously with his Lordship[1] than wisely. Great men have great advantages, to which little ones have no need to make any voluntary addition; and it is perhaps one of the privileges to which their superiority is apt to think itself entitled, that they are in some sort emancipated from those obligations of civility and attention to small folks, by which the latter hold themselves bound in all their intercourse with *them*. It is possible, for instance, that his Lordship, without being at all offended by your application, may seem to take you at your word, and to avail himself of the leave you have given him to be silent, and in reality mean no such thing. He might, when he had just read your letter, even mean the contrary, and say to himself, I will send the poor devils something to keep them alive, by the first opportunity I have of writing to Mr. Unwin; but

[1] Lord Petre.

other important matters intervening, his favourite mare having taken a nail in her foot, or his Lordship having occasion possibly to settle the structure and furniture of a new chariot, in that negligence of little men and little matters that belongs to nobility, he might overlook poor Butsbury and its benevolent advocate altogether. You in the mean time have precluded yourself from all future intercession in their behalf, because though his Lordship might not mean to put a silent negative upon your suit, you cannot be sure that he did not. I think therefore that you soared a little too high into the regions of civility upon this occasion; and if instead of telling him you should interpret his silence as an everlasting Nay, you had taken the liberty to insinuate the uneasiness of a state of suspense, and that being anxious both for the speedy relief of the people at Butsbury, and anxious likewise to know that you had not offended by addressing him in their behalf, you should therefore wait with some impatience for an answer,—you had done as well. But *serò sapere* belongs to man, and the pain that the acquisition of such wisdom costs us, amounts often to the full value of the purchase; and where feelings like yours are in question, perhaps to more.

I heartily wish you may be able to accommodate your difference about tithes without a lawsuit; both because the matter in dispute is small, and because you are the last man living that should thrust yourself in among the nettles of litigation, if you can possibly avoid it; having so little flesh to feed that ravenous vexation of spirit to which you are liable. But if you must engage, and there be no remedy, in that case I recommend to you the celebrated Joseph Hill for an attorney, the Exchequer as well as the Chancery being his familiar province. He is an honest man, as a certain poet sings truly, and also of great ability—*μικρον δεμας αλλα μαχητης*. Barrister I know none, but he knows them all, and will recommend to you the fittest for the purpose.

Je suis mortifié that your cheese turns out no better; it came from a country most famous for that commodity, and was in my judgement the best of two which we were permitted to purchase as a favour:—*sed de caseis non est disputandum.*

The press proceeds like a broad-wheeled waggon, slow and sure. After the correction of the two first sheets, a complete month *intervened before* I received two more; and before I

am favoured with another packet perhaps another month may be almost expended: So the wild goose in the meadow flaps her wings and flaps them, but yet she mounts not; she stands on tiptoe on the banks of Ouse, she meditates an ascent, she stretches her long neck, she flaps her wings again; the successful repetition of her efforts at last bears her above the ground; she mounts into the heavenly regions exulting, and who then shall describe her song?—to herself at least it makes ample recompense of her laborious exertions.

In the last Gentleman's Magazine, a poet appears with my signature, of whom I know nothing, except that his verses did not please me. I mean therefore in future to insert an asterisk between my two initials by way of discrimination. I tell you this, that if at any time you should pick up the Magazine at a coffee-house, and cast your eye upon W. * C. you may know your friend when you see him.

We are as well as this terrible and unseasonable winter will permit. In the course of last week indeed I was very ill for a day or two, but James's powders has restored me.

Our best love attends you and all yours. My dear friend, I am very affectionately always at your service.

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, March 19, 1785.

You will wonder, no doubt, when I tell you that I write upon a card-table; and will be still more surprised when I add, that we breakfast, dine, sup, upon a card-table. In short, it serves all purposes, except the only one for which it was originally designed. The solution of this mystery shall follow, lest it should run in your head at a wrong time, and should puzzle you, perhaps, when you are on the point of ascending your pulpit: for I have heard you say, that at such seasons your mind is often troubled with impertinent intrusions. The round table, which we formerly had in use, was unequal to the pressure of my superincumbent breast and elbows. When I wrote upon it, it creaked and tilted, and, by a variety of inconvenient tricks, disturbed the process. The fly-table was too slight and too small; the square dining-table, too heavy and too large, occupying, when its leaves were spread, almost the whole parlour; and the sideboard-table, having its station at

too great a distance from the fire, and not being easily shifted out of its place and into it again, by reason of its size, was equally unfit for my purpose. The card-table, therefore, which had for sixteen years been banished as mere lumber; the card-table, which is covered with green baize, and is, therefore, preferable to any other that has a slippery surface; the card-table, that stands firm and never totters,—is advanced to the honour of assisting me upon my scribbling occasions; and, because we choose to avoid the trouble of making frequent changes in the position of our household furniture, proves equally serviceable upon all others. It has cost us now and then the downfall of a glass: for, when covered with a table-cloth, the fish-ponds are not easily discerned; and not being seen, are sometimes as little thought of. But having numerous good qualities which abundantly compensate that single inconvenience, we spill upon it our coffee, our wine, and our ale, without murmuring, and resolve that it shall be our table still, to the exclusion of all others. Not to be tedious, I will add but one more circumstance upon the subject, and that only because it will impress upon you, as much as any thing that I have said, a sense of the value we set upon its escritorial capacity.—Parched and penetrated on one side by the heat of the fire, it has opened into a large fissure, which pervades not the moulding of it only, but the very substance of the plank. At the mouth of this aperture, a sharp splinter presents itself, which, as sure as it comes in contact with a gown or an apron, tears it. It happens, unfortunately, to be on that side of this excellent and never-to-be-forgotten table which Mrs. Unwin sweeps with her apparel, almost as often as she rises from her chair. The consequences need not, to use the fashionable phrase, be given in detail: but the needle sets all to rights; and the card-table still holds possession of its functions without a rival.

Clean roads and milder weather have once more released us, opening a way for our escape into our accustomed walks. We have both, I believe, been sufferers by such a long confinement. Mrs. Unwin has had a nervous fever all the winter, and I a stomach that has quarrelled with every thing, and not seldom even with its bread and butter. Her complaint, I hope, is at length removed; but mine seems more obstinate, giving way to *nothing that I* can oppose to it, except just in the

moment when the opposition is made. I ascribe this malady —both our maladies, indeed—in a great measure, to our want of exercise. We have each of us practised more, in other days, than lately we have been able to take; and for my own part, till I was more than thirty years old, it was almost essential to my comfort to be perpetually in motion. My constitution, therefore, misses, I doubt not, its usual aids of this kind; and unless, for purposes which I cannot foresee, Providence should interpose to prevent it, will probably reach the moment of its dissolution the sooner for being so little disturbed. A vitiated digestion, I believe, always terminates, if not cured, in the production of some chronical disorder. In several I have known it produce a dropsy. But no matter. Death is inevitable; and whether we die to-day or to-morrow, a watery death or a dry one is of no consequence. The state of our spiritual health is all. Could I discover a few more symptoms of convalescence there, this body might moulder into its original dust without one sigh from me. Nothing of all this did I mean to say; but I have said it, and must now seek another subject.

One of our most favourite walks is spoiled. The spinney is cut down to the stumps: even the lilacs and the syringas, to the stumps. Little did I think, (though indeed I might have thought it,) that the trees which skreened me from the sun last summer would this winter be employed in roasting potatoes and boiling tea-kettles for the poor of Olney. But so it has proved; and we ourselves have, at this moment, more than two waggon loads of them in our wood-loft.

> Such various services can trees perform;
> Whom once they skreen'd from heat, in time they warm.

The mention of the poor reminds me of saying, in answer to your application in behalf of the Freemans, that they long since received a portion of their nameless benefactor's annual remittance. Mrs. Unwin sent them more than twelve pounds of beef, and two gallon loaves.

A letter from Manchester reached our town last Sunday, addressed to the Mayor or other chief magistrate of Olney. The purport of it was, to excite him and his neighbours to petition Parliament against the concessions to Ireland that *Government* has in contemplation. Mr. Maurice Smith, as *constable,* took the letter. But whether that most respectable

personage amongst us intends to comply with the terms of it, or not, I am ignorant. For myself, however, I can pretty well answer, that I shall sign no petition of the sort; both because I do not think myself competent to a right understanding of the question, and because it appears to me, that, whatever be the event, no place in England can be less concerned in it than Olney.

We rejoice that you are all well. Our love attends Mrs. Newton and yourself, and the young ladies.

I am yours, my dear friend, as usual, WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, March 20, 1785.

I THANK you for your letter. It made me laugh, and there are not many things capable of being contained within the dimensions of a letter, for which I see cause to be more thankful. I was pleased too to see my opinion of his Lordship's *nonchalance* upon a subject that you had so much at heart, completely verified. I do not know that the eye of a nobleman was ever dissected. I cannot help supposing however that, were that organ, as it exists in the head of such a personage, to be accurately examined, it would be found to differ materially in its construction from the eye of a commoner; so very different is the view that men in an elevated, and in an humble station, have of the same object. What appears great, sublime, beautiful, and important, to you and to me, when submitted to the notice of my lord, or his grace, and submitted too with the utmost humility, is either too minute to be visible at all, or if seen, seems trivial, and of no account. My supposition therefore seems not altogether chimerical.

In two months I have corrected proof sheets to the amount of ninety-six pages, and no more. In other words, I have received three packets. Nothing is quick enough for impatience, and I suppose that the impatience of an author has the quickest of all possible movements. It appears to me however that at this rate we shall not publish till next autumn. Should you happen therefore to pass Johnson's door, pop in your head as you go, and just insinuate to him, that, were his remittances rather more frequent, that frequency would be no inconvenience to me. I much expected one this evening, a fortnight having now elapsed since the arrival of the last.

But none came, and I felt myself a little mortified. I took up the newspaper however, and read it. There I found that the emperor and the Dutch are, after all their negotiations, going to war. Such reflections as these struck me. A great part of Europe is going to be involved in the greatest of all calamities;—troops are in motion,—artillery is drawn together,—cabinets are busied in contriving schemes of blood and devastation,—thousands will perish, who are incapable of understanding the dispute; and thousands, who, whatever the event may be, are little more interested in it than myself, will suffer unspeakable hardships in the course of the quarrel:—Well! Mr. Poet, and how then? You have composed certain verses, which you are desirous to see in print, and because the impression seems to be delayed, you are displeased, not to say dispirited:—be ashamed of yourself! you live in a world in which your feelings may find worthier subjects;—be concerned for the havoc of nations, and mourn over your retarded volume when you find a dearth of more important tragedies!

You postpone certain topics of conference to our next meeting. When shall it take place? I do not wish for you just now, because the garden is a wilderness, and so is all the country around us. In May we shall have asparagus, and plenty of cucumbers, and weather in which we may stroll to Weston; at least we may hope for it; therefore come in May; you will find us happy to receive you, and as much of your fair household as you can bring with you.

We are very sorry for your Uncle's indisposition. The approach of summer seems however to be much in his favour, that season being of all remedies for the rhuematism I believe the most effectual.

I thank you for your intelligence concerning the celebrity of John Gilpin. You may be sure that it was agreeable;—but your own feelings on occasion of that article pleased me most of all. Well, my friend, be comforted! You had not an opportunity of saying publicly, "I know the Author." But the author himself will say as much for you soon, and perhaps will feel in doing so a gratification equal to your own.

In the affair of face-painting, I am precisely of your opinion. Adieu. W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, April 9, 1785.

In a letter to the printer of the Northampton Mercury, we have the following history.—An ecclesiastic of the name of Zichen, German superintendant or Lutheran bishop of Zetterfeldt, in the year 1779 delivered to the courts of Hanover and Brunswick a prediction to the following purport. That an earthquake is at hand, the greatest and most destructive ever known; that it will originate in the Alps and in their neighbourhood, especially at Mount St. Gothard; at the foot of which mountain, it seems, four rivers have their source, of which the Rhine is one. The names of the rest I have forgotten. They are all to be swallowed up. That the earth will open into an immense fissure, which will divide all Europe, reaching from the aforesaid mountain to the states of Holland; that the Zuyder Sea will be absorbed in the gulf; that the Bristol Channel will be no more: in short, that the North of Europe will be separated from the South, and that seven thousand cities, towns, and villages, will be destroyed. This prediction he delivered at the aforesaid Courts, in the year seventy-nine, asserting, that in February following the commotion would begin, and that by Easter 1786, the whole would be accomplished. Accordingly, between the fifteenth and twenty-seventh of February, in the year eighty, the public gazettes and newspapers took notice of several earthquakes in the Alps, and in the regions at their foot; particularly about Mount St. Gothard. From this partial fulfilment, Mr. Okely argues the probability of a complete one, and exhorts the world to watch and be prepared. He adds, moreover, that Mr. Zichen was a pious man, a man of science, and a man of sense; and that when he gave in his writing, he offered to swear to it—I suppose, as a revelation from above. He is since dead.

Nothing in the whole affair pleases me so much, as that he has named a short day for the completion of his prophecy. It is a tedious work to hold the judgement in suspense for many years; but any body, methinks, may wait with patience till a twelvemonth shall pass away, especially when an earthquake of such magnitude is in question. I do not say that Mr. Zichen is deceived; but if he be not, I will say that he is the first modern prophet who has not both been a subject of deception *himself, and a deceiver* of others. A year will show.

Mrs. Unwin thanks Mrs. Newton for her letter. We hope that Patty has been falsely accused. But, however that may be, we see great cause to admire either the cogency of her arguments, or her husband's openness to conviction, who, by a single box on the ear, was so effectually assured of the innocence of his wife, as to become more attached to her than ever. For the sake of good husbands, it is to be hoped that she will keep her nostrum a secret, or communicate it only to ladies in her own predicament, who have need of the most forcible proofs of their integrity.

Our love attends all your family.

Believe me, my dear friend,
affectionately yours, WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, April 22, 1785.

WHEN I received your account of the great celebrity of John Gilpin, I felt myself both flattered and grieved. Being man, and having in my composition all the ingredients of which other men are made, and vanity among the rest, it pleased me to reflect that I was on a sudden become so famous, and that all the world was busy enquiring after me: but the next moment, recollecting my former self, and that thirteen years ago, as harmless as John's history is, I should not then have written it, my spirits sank, and I was ashamed of my success. Your letter was followed the next post by one from Mr. Unwin. You tell me that I am rivalled by Mrs. Bellamy; and he, that I have a competitor for fame, not less formidable, in the Learned Pig. Alas! what is an author's popularity worth, in a world that can suffer a prostitute on one side, and a pig on the other, to eclipse his brightest glories? I am therefore sufficiently humbled by these considerations; and unless I should hereafter be ordained to engross the public attention by means more magnificent than a song, am persuaded that I shall suffer no real detriment by their applause. I have produced many things, under the influence of despair, which hope would not have permitted to spring. But if the soil of that melancholy, in which I have walked so long, has thrown up here and there an unprofitable fungus, it is well, *at least*, that it is not chargeable with having brought forth *poison*. Like you, I see, or think I can see, that Gilpin may

have his use. Causes, in appearance trivial, produce often the most beneficial consequences; and perhaps my volumes may now travel to a distance, which, if they had not been ushered into the world by that notable horseman, they would never have reached.

I hope that neither the master of St. Paul's or any other school, who may have commenced my admirer on John's account, will write to me for such a reason; yet a little while, and if they have laughed with me, their note will be changed, and perhaps they will revile me. Tirocinium is no friend of theirs, on the contrary, if it have the effect I wish it to have, it will prove much their enemy; for it gives no quarter to modern pedagogues, but finding them all alike guilty of supineness and neglect in the affair of morals, condemns them, both schoolmasters and heads of colleges, without distinction. Our temper differs somewhat from that of the ancient Jews. They would neither dance nor weep. We indeed weep not, if a man mourn unto us; but I must needs say, that, if he pipe, we seem disposed to dance with the greatest alacrity. I ought to tell you that this remark has a reference to John Gilpin, otherwise having been jumbled a little out of its place you might be at a loss for the explication.

Yours, W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND, April 30, 1785.

I RETURN you thanks for a letter so warm with the intelligence of the celebrity of John Gilpin. I little thought, when I mounted him upon my Pegasus, that he would become so famous. I have learned also, from Mr. Newton, that he is equally renowned in Scotland, and that a lady there had undertaken to write a second part, on the subject of Mrs. Gilpin's return to London, but not succeeding in it as she wished, she dropped it. He tells me likewise, that the head master of St. Paul's school, (who he is I know not,) has conceived, in consequence of the entertainment that John has afforded him, a vehement desire to write to me. Let us hope he will alter his mind; for should we even exchange civilities upon the occasion, Tirocinium will spoil all. The great estimation however in which this knight of the stone-bottles is held, may turn out a circumstance propitious to the volume of which his history

will make a part. Those events that prove the prelude to our greatest success, are often apparently trivial in themselves, and such as seemed to promise nothing. The disappointment that Horace mentions is reversed—We design a mug, and it proves a hogshead. It is a little hard, that I alone should be unfurnished with a printed copy of this facetious story. When you visit London next, you must buy the most elegant impression of it, and bring it with you. I thank you also for writing to Johnson. I likewise wrote to him myself. Your letter and mine together have operated to admiration. There needs nothing more but that the effect be lasting, and the whole will soon be printed. We now draw towards the middle of the fifth book of the Task. The man, Johnson, is like unto some vicious horses, that I have known. They would not budge till they were spurred, and when they were spurred, they would kick.—So did he; his temper was somewhat disconcerted: but his pace was quickened, and I was contented.

I was very much pleased with the following sentence in Mr. Newton's last;—"I am perfectly satisfied with the propriety of your proceeding as to the publication."—Now therefore we are friends again. Now he once more enquires after the work, which, till he had disburthened himself of this acknowledgement, neither he nor I, in any of our letters to each other, ever mentioned. Some side-wind has wafted to him a report of those reasons by which I justified my conduct. I never made a secret of them, but both your mother and I have studiously deposited them with those who we thought were most likely to transmit them to him. They wanted only a hearing, which once obtained, their solidity and cogency were such that they were sure to prevail.

You mention Bensley. I formerly knew the man you mention, but his elder brother much better. We were schoolfellows, and he was one of a club of seven Westminster men, to which I belonged, who dined together every Thursday. Should it please God to give me ability to perform the poet's part to some purpose, many whom I once called friends, but who have since treated me with a most magnificent indifference, will be ready to take me by the hand again, and some, whom I never held in that estimation, will, like Bensley, (who was *but a boy* when I left London,) boast of a connexion with me *which they* never had. Had I the virtues, and graces, and

accomplishments of St. Paul himself, I might have them at Olney, and nobody would care a button about me, yourself and one or two more excepted. Fame begets favour; and one talent, if it be rubbed a little bright by use and practice, will procure a man more friends than a thousand virtues. Dr. Johnson, I remember, in the life of one of our poets, (I believe of Savage,) says, that he retired from the world, flattering himself that he should be regretted. But the world never missed him. I think his observation upon it is, that the vacancy made by the retreat of any individual is soon filled up; that a man may always be obscure, if he chooses to be so; and that he, who neglects the world, will be by the world neglected.

Your mother and I walked yesterday in the Wilderness. As we entered the gate, a glimpse of something white, contained in a little hole in the gate-post, caught my eye. I looked again, and discovered a bird's nest, with two tiny eggs in it. By and by they will be fledged, and tailed, and get wing-feathers, and fly. My case is somewhat similar to that of the parent bird. My nest is in a little nook. Here I brood and hatch, and in due time my progeny takes wing and whistles.

We wait for the time of your coming with pleasant expectation. Yours truly, W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, May, 1785.

I DO not know that I shall send you news; but, whether it be news or not, it is necessary that I should relate the fact, lest I should omit an article of intelligence important at least at Olney. The event took place much nearer to you than to us, and yet it is possible that no account of it may yet have reached you.—Mr. Ashburner, the elder, went to London on Tuesday se'nnight in perfect health and in high spirits, so as to be remarkably cheerful; and was brought home in a hearse the Friday following. Soon after his arrival in town, he complained of an acute pain in his elbow, then in his shoulder, then in both shoulders; was blooded; took two doses of such medicine as an apothecary thought might do him good; and died on Thursday, in the morning, at ten o'clock. When I first heard the tidings, I could hardly credit them; and yet have lived long enough myself to have seen manifold and most

convincing proofs, that neither health, great strength, nor even youth itself, afford the least security from the stroke of death. It is not common, however, for men at the age of thirty-six to die so suddenly. I saw him but a few days before, with a bundle of gloves and hatbands under his arm, at the door of Geary Ball, who lay at that time a corpse. The following day, I saw him march before the coffin, and lead the procession that attended Geary to the grave. He might be truly said to march, for his step was heroic, his figure athletic, and his countenance as firm and confident as if he had been born only to bury others, and was sure never to be buried himself. Such he appeared to me, while I stood at the window and contemplated his deportment; and then he died.

I am sensible of the tenderness and affectionate kindness with which you recollect our past intercourse, and express your hopes of my future restoration. I, too, within the last eight months, have had my hopes, though they have been of short duration, cut off like the foam upon the waters. Some previous adjustments, indeed, are necessary, before a lasting expectation of comfort can have place in me. There are those persuasions in my mind which either entirely forbid the entrance of hope, or, if it enter, immediately eject it. They are incompatible with any such inmate, and must be turned out themselves before so desirable a guest can possibly have secure possession. This, you say, will be done. It may be, but it is not done yet; nor has a single step in the course of God's dealings with me been taken towards it. If I mend, no creature ever mended so slowly that recovered at last. I am like a slug or snail, that has fallen into a deep well: slug as he is, he performs his descent with an alacrity proportioned to his weight; but he does not crawl up again quite so fast. Mine was a rapid plunge; but my return to daylight, if I am indeed returning, is leisurely enough.—I wish you a swift progress, and a pleasant one, through the great subject that you have in hand; and set that value upon your letters to which they are in themselves entitled, but which is certainly increased by that peculiar attention which the writer of them pays to me. Were I such as I once was, I should say that I have a claim upon your particular notice which nothing ought to supersede. Most *of your other* connexions you may fairly be said to have formed *by your own act*; but your connexion with me was the work

of God. The kine that went up with the ark from Bethshemesh left what they loved behind them, in obedience to an impression which to them was perfectly dark and unintelligible. Your journey to Huntingdon was not less wonderful. He, indeed, who sent you, knew well wherefore, but you knew not. That dispensation, therefore, would furnish me, as long as we can both remember it, with a plea for some distinction at your hands, had I occasion to use and urge it, which I have not. But I am altered since that time; and if your affection for me had ceased, you might very reasonably justify your change by mine. I can say nothing for myself at present; but this I can venture to foretell, that should the restoration of which my friends assure me obtain, I shall undoubtedly love those who have continued to love me, even in a state of transformation from my former self, much more than ever. I doubt not that Nebuchadnezzar had friends in his prosperity; all kings have many. But when his nails became like eagles' claws, and he ate grass like an ox, I suppose he had few to pity him.

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I am glad that Johnson is in fact a civiller man than I supposed him. My quarrel with him was not for any stricture of his upon my poetry, (for he has made several, and many of them have been judicious, and my work will be the better for them,) but for a certain rudeness with which he questioned my judgement of a writer of the last century, though I only mention the effect that his verses had upon me when a boy. There certainly was at the time a bustle in his temper, occasioned, I imagine, by my being a little importunate with him to proceed. He has however recovered himself since; and, except that the press seems to have stood still this last week, has printed as fast as I could wish. Had he kept the same pace from the beginning, the book had been published, as indeed it ought to have been, three months ago. That evil report of his indolence reaches me from everybody that knows him, and is so general, that had I a work, or the publication of one in hand, the expenses of which I intended to take the hazard of upon myself, I should be very much afraid to employ him. He who will neglect himself cannot well be expected to attend to the interests of another.

We are going to pay Mr. Pomfret a morning visit. Our

errand is to see a fine bed of tulips, a sight that I never saw. Fine painting, and God the artist.—Mrs. Unwin has something to say in the cover. I leave her therefore to make her own courtesy, and only add that I am yours and Mrs. Newton's

Affectionate WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, June 4, 1785.

THANKS for the stockings, thanks for the mackerel. We were very sorry to learn from the bearer of the former that Mrs. Newton is still indisposed, and to such a degree that she could not spare Sally Johnson, whose intended journey, we are sure, would not have been postponed, had there not been too much cause for it. We heartily wish for a more favourable account of her.

Mr. Greatheed had your letter the day after we received it. He is a well-bred, agreeable young man, and one whose eyes have been opened, I doubt not, for the benefit of others, as well as for his own. He preached at Olney, a day or two ago, and I have reason to think with acceptance and success. One person, at least, who had been in prison some weeks, received his enlargement under him. I should have been glad to have been a hearer; but that privilege is not allowed me yet. Indeed, since I told you that I had hope, I have never ceased to despair; and have repented that I made my boast so soon, more than once. A king may forbid a man to appear before him, and it were strange if the King of kings might not do the same. I know it to be his will that I should not enter into his presence now; when the prohibition is taken off, I shall enter; but in the mean time I should neither please him, nor serve myself, by intruding.

We have lately been well taken in, to speak in the jockey phrase, or to speak more classically, duped and imposed upon. A certain short man with a rosy round face, and a protuberant belly, calling himself Mr. Crawford, minister of a dissenting congregation in the Borough, attended us one day last week with a petition from his church for assistance towards payment of a debt incurred by rebuilding their meeting-house. Mrs. Unwin received him in the parlour. I was in the garden and was called in. Notwithstanding that physiognomy has, by the ingenious Mr. Lavater, been at length improved into a

science, yet having never made it my particular study, I am with reason apt to distrust my own skill in the interpretation of features. On this occasion, however, a better opinion of my proficiency would have been advantageous to myself, and I should have done the object of it no wrong. The moment I saw him, something seemed to say to me, "that fellow is a rascal!" I rejected the information, to which had I given due credit, I should have saved five shillings. From this place he went to Towcester, gleaning however all that he could get at Wellinborough, and at other places by the way. At Towcester, a little on this side of the town, he was seen by Mr. Shepherd, a dissenting minister of that place, leading a female companion into a wood at no great distance from the road, whom he saw him pick up as he went. Arriving not long after in the town of Towcester, he began immediately to exercise his petitioning talents, and calling in the first place upon Mr. Shepherd, was of course not a little surprised to find that he encountered, in that gentleman, an eye-witness of his shame. He denied the charge at first, but at length, being hard pushed, confessed it, and had the impudence to plead the festivity of the season in his excuse, it being fair-time at Towcester, and the road consequently abounding with objects of temptation. He had drank, he said, a little too freely, and was therefore not sufficiently on his guard. Mr. Scott received this narrative from Mr. Shepherd, and I from Mr. Scott. The report of his offence flying before him, and meeting him in every place, his harvest in this part of the world at least was over. Accordingly he found it necessary to return. In his way to town, he passed again through Olney, not suspecting that his ill-savour had been wafted this way also. Mr. Wilson saw him, and as soon as he could followed him, overtook him upon the bridge, related to him what he had heard, and begged him, if he had the means of justification in his power, and valued either his own character, or the Gospel that he preached, (for he had preached at Olney,) to return and clear himself. He answered, that he valued his character highly, but that he had left some clean linen at Newport, and it was indispensably necessary that he should enquire after it. In vain Mr. Wilson assured him that a clear character was of more importance than a clean shirt; he persisted in his purpose, promising to return and to exculpate himself either in the evening or the

next morning. But unhappily some other very important hinderance intervened, and he never came.—I have told you this long story, merely to guard you against such a vagrant, should he come in your way, which I thought not impossible. It is true, however, (for enquiry has been made,) that he is a minister, that he ministers in the Borough, and that his meeting-house has been rebuilt.

My book is at length printed, and I returned the last proof to Johnson on Tuesday. I have ordered a copy to Charles Square, and have directed Johnson to enclose one with it, addressed to John Bacon, Esq. I was obliged to give you this trouble, not being sure of the place of his abode. I have taken the liberty to mention him, as an artist, in terms that he well deserves. The passage was written soon after I received the engraving with which he favoured me, and while the impression that it made upon me was yet warm. He will, therefore, excuse the liberty that I have taken, and place it to the account of those feelings which he himself excited.

The walking season is returned. We visit the Wilderness daily. Mr. Throckmorton, last summer, presented me with a key of his garden. The family are all absent, except the priest and a servant or two; so that the honeysuckles, lilacs, and syringas, are all our own.

We are well. Mrs. Unwin subjoins her thanks to mine for the fish, and for the trouble that Mrs. Newton has taken with the stockings; and our united love attends yourself and the young ladies.

Yours, my dear friend,
With much affection, W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, June 12, 1785.

It was at first your Mother's design to write, but learning from a second application to your letter that you would be far removed from Stock when hers should arrive there, she changed her purpose, and has entrusted the charge to me. My business therefore is to express the agreeable views we have of your expected visit here, and the sensations with which they are accompanied. Many words, I trust, will not be necessary to assure you that we enjoy the prospect which in your Mother's *contemplation* and mine appears to be all that we could wish,

xcept that Mrs. Unwin's presence here makes not a part of . If it were possible that she could waft herself to the door f the diligence, and by means of the diligence contrive to be et down at ours, we should allow the party to be complete. Ve could without difficulty make room for your other self, hough under such a roof as ours it would puzzle him who acked up the Iliad in a nutshell to make room for more; else Villiam, and Mary, and half a dozen others, if they were yours ould be most welcome. She begs, and so do I, that you ould mention us not so much civilly as affectionately to Miss Inwin, and tell her that being no strangers to her character, ut having learned it from the best authority, even your own, e sincerely rejoice that she is of the number. I indeed am nder some little concern upon the occasion, having never nown a writer in my life whose good fortune it had been in ny degree to please his readers, that did not disappoint in erson the expectations he had raised by his book; insomuch at if I were asked which is the best part of a tolerable poet, should answer, that which he has printed. But it will be ell; my heart tells me that in all my intercourse with my iends I wish to shine in nothing but in esteeming and loving em as I ought,—a part, to which, however I may fail in hers, I have the vanity to think myself not altogether unequal. emember us also, with much affection, to Miss Shuttleworth, ith whom being already acquainted, we are warranted by our perience to say that we shall be happy to see her. We are ly sorry that we must lose you so soon; but of this, which the only disagreeable part of the story, we will think as little possible at present.

Under the languor and lassitude with which the heat of this y affects me, I am not able to send you a long letter. I am tting in the summerhouse, (not the greenhouse,) the door, hich is open, is toward the garden, and the window, which open also, is toward a pleasant orchard, so that if it were ossible to be cool, that happiness would be mine, but in such day as this there is no room to hope for it. You have pleased e much by taking a book to Dewsbury. I wanted to send ne, but knew of no conveyance. John Gilpin, whom you y you directed hither, has gallopped to some other place; least he has not reached Olney.

Forget not to *give our love to* the Powleys. Your sister, we

hope, will receive a benefit to her spirits from your visit, for which she will be long the better. If good news, as Solomon says, coming from a far country be pleasant, the sight of friends from a far country must be still more so.

John, once the Little, but now almost the Great, and promising to be altogether such in time, make yourself master of the Iliad and of the Odyssey as soon as you can, and then you will be master of two of the finest poems that ever were composed by man, and composed in the finest language that ever man uttered. All languages of which I know anything are gibberish compared with Greek.

My dear William, ever yours, WM. C.

Many thanks for a most excellent turbot, and for a lobster equally good.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM BULL.

MY DEAR FRIEND, June 13.

YOUR note written yesterday we received this morning, and are this moment going to breakfast. We are truly sorry for the occasion of our disappointment.

Mrs. Unwin well knows the healer of all diseases, and will not fail to apply to him on your child's behalf.

Yours affectionately, WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, June 25, 1785.

I WRITE in a nook that I call my *Boudoir*. It is a summer-house not much bigger than a sedan chair, the door of which opens into the garden, that is now crowded with pinks, roses, and honey-suckles, and the window into my neighbour's orchard. It formerly served an apothecary, now dead, as a smoking-room; and under my feet is a trap-door, which once covered a hole in the ground, where he kept his bottles. At present, however, it is dedicated to sublimer uses. Having lined it with garden mats, and furnished it with a table and two chairs, here I write all that I write in summer-time, whether to my friends, or to the public. It is secure from all noise, and refuge from all intrusion; for intruders sometimes trouble me in the winter evenings at Olney. But (thanks to *my Boudoir!*) I can now hide myself from them. A poet's

retreat is sacred. They acknowledge the truth of that proposition, and never presume to violate it.

The last sentence puts me in mind to tell you that I have ordered my volume to your door. My bookseller is the most dilatory of all his fraternity, or you would have received it long since. It is more than a month since I returned him the last proof, and consequently since the printing was finished. I sent him the manuscript at the beginning of last November, that he might publish while the town was full;—and he will hit the exact moment when it is entirely empty. Patience (you will perceive) is in no situation exempted from the severest trials; a remark that may serve to comfort you under the numberless trials of your own. W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, June 25, 1785.

A NOTE that we received from Mr. Scott, by your desire, informing us of the amendment of Mrs. Newton's health, demands our thanks, having relieved us from no little anxiety upon her account. The welcome purport of it was soon after confirmed by Sally Johnson, so that, at present, we feel ourselves at liberty to hope that by this time Mrs. Newton's recovery is complete. Sally's looks do credit to the air of Hoxton. She seems to have lost nothing, either in complexion or dimensions by her removal hence; and, which is still more to the credit of your great town, she seems in spiritual things also, to be the very same Sally whom we knew once at Olney. Situation, therefore, is nothing. They who have the means of grace, and a heart to use them, will thrive any where; others no where. More than a few, who were formerly ornaments of this garden which you once watered, here flourished, and here have seemed to wither. Others, transplanted into a soil apparently less favourable to their growth, either find the exchange an advantage, or at least are not impaired by it. Of myself, who had once both leaves and fruit, but who have now neither, I say nothing; or only this,—That when I am overwhelmed with despair, I repine at my barrenness, and think it hard to be thus blighted: but when a glimpse of hope breaks in upon me, I am contented to be the sapless thing I am, knowing that He who has commanded me to wither, can command me to flourish again, when he pleases. My experiences, however, of this latter kind, are rare and transient. The light that reaches me cannot be compared either to that of the sun or of the moon. It is a flash in a dark night, during which the heavens seem opened only to shut again.

We enquired, but could not learn, that any thing memorable passed in the last moments of poor Nathan. I listened in expectation that he would at least acknowledge what all who knew him in his more lively days had so long seen and lamented, his neglect of the best things, and his eager pursuit of riches. But he was totally silent upon that subject. Yet it was evident that the cares of this world had choked in him much of the good seed, and that he was no longer the Nathan whom we have so often heard at the old house, rich in spirit, though

poor in expression; whose desires were unutterable in every sense, both because they were too big for language, and because Nathan had no language for them. I believe with you, however, that he is safe at home. He had a weak head and strong passions, which He who made him well knew, and for which He would undoubtedly make great allowance. The forgiveness of God is large and absolute; so large, that though in general He calls for confession of our sins, He sometimes dispenses with that preliminary, and will not suffer even the delinquent himself to mention his transgression. He has so forgiven it, that He seems to have forgotten it too, and will have the sinner to forget it also. Such instances, perhaps, may not be common, but I know that there have been such, and it might be so with Nathan.

I know not what Johnson is about, neither do I now enquire. It will be a month to-morrow since I returned him the last proof. He might, I suppose, have published by this time, without hurrying himself into a fever, or breaking his neck through the violence of his dispatch. But having never seen the book advertised, I conclude that he has not. Had the parliament risen at the usual time, he would have been just too late, and though it sits longer than usual, or is likely to do so, I should not wonder if he were too late at last. Dr. Johnson laughs at Savage for charging the still-birth of a poem of his upon the bookseller's delay; yet when Dr. Johnson had a poem of his own to publish, no man ever discovered more anxiety to meet the market. But I have taken thought about it, till I am grown weary of the subject, and at last have placed myself much at my ease upon the cushion of this one resolution, that if ever I have dealings hereafter with my present manager, we will proceed upon other terms.

Mr. Wright called here last Sunday, by whom Lord Dartmouth made obliging enquiries after the volume, and was pleased to say that he was impatient to see it. I told him that I had ordered a copy to his Lordship, which I hoped he would receive if not soon, at least before he should retire into the country. I have also ordered one to Mr. Barham; and have many times blushed that I omitted to do so on the former occasion.

We suffer in this country very much by drought. The corn, I believe, is in most places thin, and the hay harvest amounts

in some to not more than the fifth of a crop. Heavy taxes, excessive levies for the poor, and lean acres, have brought our farmers almost to their wits' end; and many, who are not farmers, are not very remote from the same point of despondency. I do not despond, because I was never much addicted to anxious thoughts about the future in respect of temporals. But I feel myself a little angry with a minister, who, when he imposed a tax upon gloves, was not ashamed to call them a luxury. Caps and boots lined with fur are not accounted a luxury in Russia, neither can gloves be reasonably deemed such in a climate sometimes hardly less severe than that. Nature, indeed, is content with little, and luxury seems, in some respect, rather relative, than of any fixed construction. Accordingly it may become, in time, a luxury for an Englishman to wear breeches, because it is possible to exist without them, and because persons of a moderate income may find them too expensive. I hope, however, to be hid in the dust before that day shall come; for, having worn them so many years, if they be indeed a luxury, they are such a one as I could very ill spare; yet spare them I must, if I cannot afford to wear them.

We are tolerably well in health, and as to spirits, much as usual—seldom better, sometimes worse.

Yours, my dear friend, affectionately, WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, July 9, 1785.

You wrong your own judgement when you represent it as not to be trusted; and mine, if you suppose that I have that opinion of it. Had you disapproved, I should have been hurt and mortified. No man's disapprobation would have hurt me more. Your favourable sentiments of my book must consequently give me pleasure in the same proportion. By the post, last Sunday, I had a letter from Lord Dartmouth, in which he thanked me for my volume, of which he had read only a part. Of that part, however, he expresses himself in terms with which my authorship has abundant cause to be satisfied; and adds, that the specimen has made him impatient for the whole. I have likewise received a letter from a judicious friend of mine in London, and a man of fine taste, unknown to you, who speaks of it in the same language. Fortified by these cordials, *I feel myself* qualified to face the world without much anxiety,

and delivered in a great measure from those fears which, I suppose, all men feel upon the like occasion.

My first volume I sent, as you may remember, to the Lord Chancellor, accompanied by a friendly but respectful epistle. His Lordship, however, thought it not worth his while to return me any answer, or to take the least notice of my present. I sent it also to Colman, manager of the Haymarket theatre, with whom I once was intimate. He likewise proved too great a man to recollect me; and though he has published since, did not account it necessary to return the compliment. I have allowed myself to be a little pleased with an opportunity to show them that I resent their treatment of me, and have sent this book to neither of them. They, indeed, are the former friends to whom I particularly allude in my epistle to Mr. Hill; and it is possible that they may take to themselves a censure that they so well deserve. If not, it matters not; for I shall never have any communication with them hereafter.

If Mr. Bates has found it difficult to furnish you with a motto to your volumes, I have no reason to imagine that I shall do it easily. I shall not leave my books unransacked; but there is something so new and peculiar in the occasion that suggested your subject, that I question whether, in all the classics, can be found a sentence suited to it. Our sins and follies, in this country, assume a shape that Heathen writers had never any opportunity to notice. They deified the dead, indeed, but not in the Temple of Jupiter. The new-made god had an altar of his own; and they conducted the ceremony without sacrilege or confusion. It is possible, however, and I think barely so, that somewhat may occur susceptible of accommodation to your purpose; and if it should, I shall be happy to serve you with it.

I told you, I believe, that the Spinney has been cut down; and, though it may seem sufficient to have mentioned such an occurrence once, I cannot help recurring to the melancholy theme. Last night, at near nine o'clock, we entered it for the first time this summer. We had not walked many yards in it, before we perceived that this pleasant retreat is destined never to be a pleasant retreat again. In one more year, the whole will be a thicket. That which was once the serpentine walk is now in a state of transformation, and is already become as woody as the rest. Poplars and elms without number are

springing in the turf. They are now as high as the knee. Before the summer is ended, they will be twice as high; and the growth of another season will make them trees. It will then be impossible for any but a sportsman and his dog to penetrate it. The desolation of the whole scene is such, that it sunk our spirits. The ponds are dry. The circular one, in front of the hermitage, is filled with flags and rushes; so that, if it contains any water, not a drop is visible. The weeping willow at the side of it, the only ornamental plant that has escaped the axe, is dead. The ivy and the moss, with which the hermitage was lined, are torn away; and the very mats that covered the benches have been stripped off, rent in tatters, and trodden under foot. So farewell, Spinney; I have promised myself that I will never enter it again. We have both prayed in it: you for me, and I for you. But it is desecrated from this time forth, and the voice of prayer will be heard in it no more. The fate of it in this respect, however deplorable, is not peculiar. The spot where Jacob anointed his pillar, and which is more apposite, the spot once honoured with the presence of Him who dwelt in the bush, have long since suffered similar disgrace, and are become common ground

There is great severity in the application of the text you mention—I am *their music*. But it is not the worse for that. We both approve it highly. The other in Ezekiel does not seem quite so pat. The prophet complains that his word was to the people like a pleasant song, heard with delight but soon forgotten. At the commemoration, I suppose that the word is nothing, but the music all in all. The Bible, however, will abundantly supply you with applicable passages. All passages, indeed, that animadvert upon the profanation of God's house and worship, seem to present themselves upon the occasion.

We have returned thanks to Mr. Wm. Unwin for a turbot and lobster, and he disclaims all right to the acknowledgement. Is it due to you and Mrs. Newton? If it be, accept a grateful one, accept likewise our love and best wishes; and believe me, my dear friend, with warm and true affection,

Yours, WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR WILLIAM, July 27, 1785.

You and your party left me in a frame of mind that indisposed

me much to company. I comforted myself with the hope that I should spend a silent day, in which I should find abundant leisure to indulge sensations which, though of the melancholy kind, I yet wished to nourish. But that proved vain. In less than an hour after your departure, Mr. Greatheed made his appearance at the greenhouse door. We were obliged to ask him to dinner, and he dined with us. He is an agreeable, sensible, well-bred young man; but with all his recommendations I felt that on that occasion I could have spared him. So much better are the absent, whom we love much, than the present whom we love a little. I have however made myself amends since, and nothing else having interfered, have sent many a thought after you.

You had been gone two days when a violent thunder storm came over us. I was passing out of the parlour into the hall, with Mungo at my heels, when a flash seemed to fill the room with fire. In the same instant came the clap, so that the explosion was (I suppose) perpendicular to the roof. Mungo's courage upon the tremendous occasion constrained me to smile, in spite of the solemn impression that such an event never fails to affect me with;—the moment that he heard the thunder, (which was like the burst of a great gun,) with a wrinkled forehead, and with eyes directed to the ceiling, whence the sound seemed to proceed, he barked; but he barked exactly in concert with the thunder. It thundered once, and he barked once; and so precisely in the very instant when the thunder happened, that both sounds seemed to begin and to end together. Some dogs will clap their tails close, and sneak into a corner, at such a time, but Mungo it seems is of a more fearless family. A house at no great distance from ours was the mark to which the lightning was directed; it knocked down the chimney, split the building, and carried away the corner of the next house, in which lay a fellow drunk, and asleep upon his bed;—it roused and terrified him, and he promises to get drunk no more; but I have seen a woeful end of many such conversions. I remember but one such storm at Olney since I have known the place; and I am glad that it did not happen two days sooner for the sake of the ladies, who would probably, one of them at least, have been alarmed by it. You have left behind you Thomson's Seasons, and a bottle of hartshorn. I will not promise that you shall ever see the latter

again; having a sorethroat, I made free with part of it this morning, in the way of outward application, and we shall probably find a use for the remainder. The Seasons you shall have again.

I have received, since you went, two very flattering letters of thanks, one from Mr. Bacon, and one from Mr. Barham, such as might make a lean poet plump; and an humble poet proud. But being myself neither lean nor humble, I know of no other effect that they had, than that they pleased me; and I communicate the intelligence to you, not without an assured hope that you will be pleased also. We are now going to walk, and thus far I have written before I have received your letter. Friday.—I must now be as compact as possible. When I began, I designed four sides, but my packet being transformed into two single epistles, I can consequently afford you but three. I have filled a large sheet with animadversions upon Pope, and shall send it by Sunday's post, indifferent whether Nichols detects me or not. I am proceeding in my translation—"*Velis et remis, omnibus nervis*"—as Hudibras has it; and if God give me health and ability, will put it into your hands when I see you next.

Your fish was good,—perfectly good, and we did not forget you in our cups. The money was found, and not a farthing had eloped. My hat is come, and we both admire it; but your mother's either was never sent, or sent the wrong way, for it has not reached us. Tell John that I love him with all my heart for doing so much credit to his tutor, and to my public recommendation of the very plan upon which he is educated.

Mr. Teedon has just left us. He has read my book, and, as if fearful that I had overlooked some of them myself, has pointed out to me all its beauties. I do assure you the man has a very acute discernment, and a taste that I have no fault to find with. I hope that you are of the same opinion.

Be not sorry that your love of Christ was excited in you by a picture. Could a dog or a cat suggest to me the thought that Christ is precious, I would not despise that thought because a dog or cat suggested it. The meanness of the instrument cannot debase the nobleness of the principle. He that kneels before a picture of Christ, is an idolater: but he in whose heart the sight of such a picture kindles a warm remembrance of the Saviour's sufferings, must be a Christian.

Suppose that I dream as Gardiner did, that Christ walks before me, that he turns and smiles upon me, and fills my soul with ineffable love and joy; Will a man tell me that I am deceived, that I ought not to love or rejoice in him for such a reason, because a dream is merely a picture drawn upon the imagination? I hold not with such divinity. To love Christ is the greatest dignity of man, be that affection wrought in him how it may.

Adieu! May the blessing of God be upon you all! It is your mother's heart's wish and mine.

Yours ever, W. C.

P. S. You had hardly reached Emberton when Mr. Teedon came to charge us with his thanks to Miss Unwin for her goodness to him; the poor man looked so humble and grateful, that I forgave him all his past intrusions. I beseech you, therefore, that you transmit his acknowledgments to his kind benefactress.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, August 6, 1785.

I FOUND your account of what you experienced in your state of maiden authorship very entertaining, because very natural. I suppose that no man ever made his first sally from the press without a conviction that all eyes and ears would be engaged to attend him; at least, without a thousand anxieties lest they should not. But, however arduous and interesting such an enterprise may be in the first instance, it seems to me that our feelings on the occasion soon become obtuse. I can answer, at least, for one. Mine are by no means what they were when I published my first volume. I am even so indifferent to the matter, that I can truly assert myself guiltless of the very idea of my book sometimes whole days together. God knows that my mind having been occupied more than twelve years in the contemplation of the most tremendous subjects, the world and its opinion of what I write, is become as unimportant to me as the whistling of a bird in a bush. Despair made amusement necessary, and I found poetry the most agreeable amusement. Had I not endeavoured to perform my best, it would not have amused me at all. The mere blotting of so much paper would have been but indifferent sport. God gave me grace also to wish that I might not write in vain. Accord-

ingly, I have mingled much truth with much trifle; and such truths as deserved, at least, to be clad as well and as handsomely as I could clothe them. If the world approve me not, so much the worse for them, but not for me. I have only endeavoured to serve them, and the loss will be their own. And as to their commendations, if I should chance to win them, I feel myself equally invulnerable there. The view that I have had of myself, for many years, has been so truly humiliating, that I think the praises of all mankind could not hurt me. God knows that I speak my present sense of the matter at least most truly, when I say, that the admiration of creatures like myself seems to me a weapon the least dangerous that my worst enemy could employ against me. I am fortified against it by such solidity of real self-abasement, that I deceive myself most egregiously if I do not heartily despise it. Praise belongeth to God; and I seem to myself to covet it no more than I covet divine honours. Could I assuredly hope that God would at last deliver me, I should have reason to thank him for all that I have suffered, were it only for the sake of this single fruit of my affliction,—that it has taught me how much more contemptible I am in myself than I ever before suspected, and has reduced my former share of self-knowledge, (of which at that time I had a tolerable good opinion,) to a mere nullity, in comparison with what I have acquired since. Self is a subject of inscrutable misery and mischief, and can never be studied to so much advantage as in the dark; for as the bright beams of the sun seem to impart a beauty to the foulest objects, and can make even a dunghill smile, so the light of God's countenance, vouchsafed to a fallen creature, so sweetens him and softens him for the time, that he seems, both to others and to himself, to have nothing savage or sordid about him. But the heart is a nest of serpents, and will be such while it continues to beat. If God cover the mouth of that nest with his hand, they are hushed and snug; but if he withdraw his hand, the whole family lift up their heads and hiss, and are as active and venomous as ever. This I always professed to believe from the time that I had embraced the truth, but never knew it as I know it now. To what end I have been made to know it as I do, whether for the benefit of others or for my own, or for both, or for neither, will appear hereafter.

What I have written leads me naturally to the mention of a

matter that I had forgot. I should blame nobody, not even my intimate friends, and those who have the most favourable opinion of me, were they to charge the publication of John Gilpin, at the end of so much solemn and serious truth, to the score of the author's vanity; and to suspect that, however sober I may be upon proper occasions, I have yet that itch for popularity that would not suffer me to sink my title to a jest that had been so successful. But the case is not such. When I sent the copy of *The Task* to Johnson, I desired, indeed, Mr. Unwin to ask him the question, whether or not he would choose to make it a part of the volume? This I did merely with a view to promote the sale of it. Johnson answered, "By all means." Some months afterward, he enclosed a note to me in one of my packets, in which he expressed a change of mind, alleging, that to print John Gilpin would only be to print what had been hackneyed in every magazine, in every shop, and at the corner of every street. I answered, that I desired to be entirely governed by his opinion; and that if he chose to waive it, I should be better pleased with the omission. Nothing more passed between us upon the subject, and I concluded that I should never have the immortal honour of being generally known as the author of John Gilpin. In the last packet, however, down came John, very fairly printed, and equipped for public appearance. The business having taken this turn, I concluded that Johnson had adopted my original thought, that it might prove advantageous to the sale; and as he had had the trouble and expense of printing it, I corrected the copy, and let it pass. Perhaps, however, neither the book nor the writer may be made much more famous by John's good company, than they would have been without it; for the volume has never yet been advertised, nor can I learn that Johnson intends it. He fears the expense, and the consequence must be prejudicial. Many who would purchase will remain uninformed: but I am perfectly content.

My compliment to Mr. Throckmorton was printed before he had cut down the Spinney. He indeed has not cut it down, but Mr. Morley, the tenant,—with the owner's consent, however, no doubt. My poetical civilities, however, were due to that gentleman, for more solid advantages conferred upon me in prose; without any solicitation on our part, or even a hint that we wished it, (it was indeed a favour that we could not have *aspired to,) he made* us a present of a key of his kitchen

garden, and of the fruit of it whenever we pleased. That key, I believe, was never given to any other person; nor is it likely that they should give it to many, for it is their favourite walk, and was the only one in which they could be secure from all interruption. They seem, however, to have left the country, and it is possible that he may never know that my Muse has noticed him.

I have considered your motto, and like the purport of it: but the best, because the most laconic manner of it, seems to be this—

Cum talis sis, sis noster;

utinam being, in my account of it, unnecessary.

Mrs. Newton has our hearty thanks for the turbot and lobster, which were excellent. To her and to the young ladies we beg to be affectionately remembered.

Three weeks since, Mr. Unwin and his late ward, Miss Shuttleworth, and John, called on us in their way from the north, having made an excursion so far as to Dumfries. Mr. Unwin desired me to say, that though he had been often in town since he had the pleasure of seeing you last, he had always gone thither on business, and making a short stay, had not been able to find an opportunity to pay his respects to you again.

Yours, my dear friend, most truly, W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Aug. 27, 1785.

I DID very warmly and very sincerely thank Mr. Bacon for his most friendly and obliging letter; but having written my acknowledgments in the cover, I suppose that they escaped your notice. I should not have contented myself with transmitting them through your hands, but should have addressed them immediately to himself, but that I foresaw plainly this inconvenience: that, in writing to him on such an occasion, I must almost unavoidably make self and self a book the subject. Therefore it was, as Mrs. Unwin can vouch for me, that I denied myself that pleasure. I place this matter now in the van of all that I have to say: first, that you may not overlook it; secondly, because it is uppermost in my consideration; and thirdly, because I am impatient to be exculpated from the seeming omission.

You told me, I think, that you seldom read the papers. In

our last, we had an extract from Johnson's Diary, or whatever else he called it. It is certain that the publisher of it is neither much a friend to the cause of religion nor to the author's memory; for, by the specimen of it that has reached us, it seems to contain only such stuff as has a direct tendency to expose both to ridicule. His prayers for the dead, and his minute account of the rigour with which he observed church fasts, whether he drank tea or coffee, whether with sugar or without, and whether one or two dishes of either, are the most important items to be found in this childish register of the great Johnson, supreme dictator in the chair of literature, and almost a driveller in his closet: a melancholy witness to testify how much of the wisdom of this world may consist with almost infantine ignorance of the affairs of a better. I remember a good man at Huntingdon, who, I doubt not, is now with God, and he also kept a Diary. After his death, through the neglect or foolish wantonness of his executors, it came abroad for the amusement of his neighbours. All the town saw it, and all the town found it highly diverting. It contained much more valuable matter than the poor Doctor's Journal seems to do; but it contained also a faithful record of all his deliverances from wind (for he was much troubled with flatulence), by whatever vent it escaped him; together with pious acknowledgments of the mercy. There is certainly a call for gratitude, whatsoever benefit we receive; and it is equally certain, that we ought to be humbled under the recollection of our least offences: but it would have been as well if neither my old friend had recorded his eructations, nor the Doctor his dishes of sugarless tea, or the dinners at which he ate too much. I wonder, indeed, that any man of such learned eminence as Johnson, who knew that every word he uttered was deemed oracular, and that every scratch of his pen was accounted a treasure, should leave behind him what he would have blushed to exhibit while he lived. If Virgil would have burnt his Æneid, how much more reason had these good men to have burnt their Journals.

Mr. Perry will leave none such behind him. He is dying, as I suppose you have heard. Dr. Kerr, who, I think, has visited him twice or thrice, desired at his last visit to be no more sent for. He pronounced his case hopeless; for that his thigh and leg must mortify. He is, however, in a most comfortable frame of mind. So long as he thought it possible he might recover,

he was much occupied with a review of his ministry; and under a deep impression of his deficiencies in that function, assured Mr. Raban that he intended, when he should enter upon it again, to be much more diligent than he had been. He was conscious, he said, that many fine things had been said of him; but that, though he trusted he had found grace so to walk as not to dishonour his office, he was conscious, at the same time, how little he deserved them. This, with much more to the same purport, passed on Sunday last. On Thursday, Mr. Raban was with him again; and at that time Mr. Perry knew that he must die. The rules and cautions that he had before prescribed to himself, he then addressed directly to his visitor. He exhorted him, by all means, to be earnest and affectionate in his applications to the unconverted, and not less solicitous to admonish the careless, with a head full of light, and a heart alienated from the ways of God; and those, no less, who being wise in their own conceit, were much occupied in matters above their reach, and very little with subjects of immediate and necessary concern. He added, that he had received from God during his illness, other views of sin than he had ever been favoured with before; and exhorted him by all means to be watchful. Mr. Raban being himself the reporter of these conversations, it is to be supposed that they impressed him. Admonitions from such lips, and in a dying time too, must have their weight; and it is well with the hearer, when the instruction abides with him. But our own view of these matters is, I believe, that alone which can effectually serve us. The representations of a dying man may strike us at the time; and, if they stir up in us a spirit of self-examination and inquiry, so that we rest not till we have made his views and experience our own, it is well; otherwise, the wind that passes us is hardly sooner gone, than the effect of the most serious exhortations.

We have new neighbours; with whom, however, we should be very sorry to live as such; but there is no danger. Lord Peterborough and *his* Lady Anne Foley have hired a house at Weston, and a young man of the name of Smith, who they say finds it convenient to be at a distance from his creditors, is of the party. Mr. Jones, whom we saw lately, but whom we do not see once in three months, begins to be weary of his master. His connexion with him indeed exposes him, at present, to almost inevitable danger of giving offence both to

those that are within and to those that are without. It is hardly possible for a minister of the gospel to be more unsuitably associated. I take it for granted that he will have to do with them as little as possible.

We heartily wish that Mrs. Newton's excursion to the salt water may prove beneficial both to herself and to Miss Cunningham. I need not say, give our love to them, for you will send my letter. The coldness of this August is without precedent in my remembrance, but I have heard that bathing is most salutary in such a season. We beg to be remembered affectionately to Miss Catlett, and to all who ever think of us, and who are in the number of your connexions.

Farewell, my friend. My views of my spiritual state are, as you say, altered: but they are yet far from being such as they must be, before I can be enduringly comforted.

Yours, unfeignedly, W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND, August 27, 1785.

I WAS low in spirits yesterday, when your parcel came and raised them. Every proof of attention and regard to a man who lives in a vinegar bottle is welcome from his friends on the outside of it; accordingly your books were welcome, (you must not forget by the way that I want the original, of which you have sent me the translation only,) and the ruffles from Miss Shuttleworth most welcome. I am covetous, if ever man was, of living in the remembrance of absentees whom I highly value and esteem, and consequently felt myself much gratified by her very obliging present. I have had more comfort, far more comfort, in the connexions that I have formed within the last twenty years, than in the more numerous ones that I had before.

Memorandum.—The latter are almost all Unwins or Unwinisms.

You are entitled to my thanks also for the facetious engravings of John Gilpin. A serious poem is like a swan, it flies heavily, and never far; but a jest has the wings of a swallow, that never tire, and that carry it into every nook and corner. I am perfectly a stranger however to the reception that my volume meets with, and I believe in respect of my *nonchalance* upon that subject, if authors would but copy so fair an ex-

ample, am a most exemplary character. I must tell you nevertheless, that although the laurels that I gain at Olney will never minister much to my pride, I have acquired some. The Rev. Mr. Scott is my admirer, and thinks my second volume superior to my first. It ought to be so. If we do not improve by practice, then nothing can mend us; and a man has no more cause to be mortified at being told that he has excelled himself, than the elephant had, whose praise it was, that he was the greatest elephant in the world, himself excepted. This moment it occurs to me, that we have received from you a basket of very fine fish, unacknowledged hitherto, the receipt of which I hereby then thankfully acknowledge.

If it be fair to judge of a book by an extract, I do not wonder that you were so little edified by Johnson's Journal. It is even more ridiculous than was poor ——'s of flatulent memory. The portion of it given to us in this day's paper contains not one sentiment worth one farthing; except the last, in which he resolves to bind himself with no more unbidden obligations. Poor man! one would think, that to pray for his dead wife, and to pinch himself with church fasts, had been almost the whole of his religion. I am sorry that he, who was so manly an advocate for the cause of virtue in all other places, was so childishly employed, and so superstitiously too, in his closet. Had he studied his Bible more, to which by his own confession he was in great part a stranger, he had known better what use to make of his retired hours, and had trifled less. His lucubrations of this sort have rather the appearance of religious dotage, than of any vigorous exertions towards God. It will be well if the publication prove not hurtful in its effects, by exposing the best cause, already too much despised, to ridicule still more profane. On the other side of the same paper I find a long string of aphorisms, and maxims, and rules, for the conduct of life, which, though they appear not with his name, are so much in his manner with the abovementioned, that I suspect them for his. I have not read them all, but several of them I read that were trivial enough: for the sake of one, however, I forgive him the rest; he advises never to banish hope entirely, because it is the cordial of life, although it be the greatest flatterer in the world. Such a measure of hope as may not endanger my peace by disappointment I would wish to cherish upon every subject in which I

am interested. But there lies the difficulty,—mine at least; whose sanguine temper does not incline me to, nor even permit me, moderation in any thing. A cure, however, and the only one, for all the irregularities both of hope and fear, is found in submission to the will of God. Happy they that have it!

This last sentence puts me in mind of your reference to Blair in a former letter, whom you there permitted to be your arbiter to adjust the respective claims of *who* and *that*. I do not rashly differ from so great a grammarian, nor do I at any rate differ from him altogether;—upon solemn occasions, as in prayer or preaching for instance, I would be strictly correct, and upon stately ones;—for instance were I writing an epic poem, I would be so likewise, but not upon familiar occasions. God *who* heareth prayer, is right. Hector *who* saw Patroclus, is right. And the man *that* dresses me every day, is in my mind right also;—because the contrary would give an air of stiffness and pedantry to an expression, that in respect of the matter of it cannot be too negligently made up.

Adieu, my dear William! I have scribbled with all my might, which, breakfast-time excepted, has been my employment ever since I rose, and it is now past one.

Yours, W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Sept. 24, 1785.

I AM sorry that an excursion, which you would otherwise have found so agreeable, was attended with so great a drawback upon its pleasures as Miss Cunningham's illness must needs have been. Had she been able to bathe in the sea, it might have been of service to her; but I knew her weakness and delicacy of habit to be such as did not encourage any very sanguine hopes that the regimen would suit her. I remember Southampton well, having spent much time there; but though I was young, and had no objections on the score of conscience either to dancing or cards, I never was in the assembly-room in my life. I never was fond of company, and especially disliked it in the country. A walk to Netley Abbey, or to Freemantle, or to Redbridge, or a book by the fire-side, had always more charms for me than any other amusement that the place afforded. I was also a sailor, and being of Sir Thomas Hesketh's party, *who was himself* born one, was often pressed

into the service. But though I gave myself an air, and wore trowsers, I had no genuine right to that honour, disliking much to be occupied in great waters, unless in the finest weather. How they contrive to elude the wearisomeness that attends a sea life, who take long voyages, you know better than I; but for my own part, I seldom have sailed so far as from Hampton river to Portsmouth, without feeling the confinement irksome, and sometimes to a degree that was almost insupportable. There is a certain perverseness, of which I believe all men have a share, but of which no man has a larger share than I;—I mean that temper, or humour, or whatever it is to be called, that indisposes us to a situation, though not unpleasant in itself, merely because we cannot get out of it. I could not endure the room in which I now write, were I conscious that the door were locked. In less than five minutes I should feel myself a prisoner, though I can spend hours in it, under an assurance that I may leave it when I please, without experiencing any tedium at all. It was for this reason, I suppose, that the yacht was always disagreeable to me. Could I have stepped out of it into a corn-field or a garden, I should have liked it well enough; but being surrounded with water, I was as much confined in it as if I had been surrounded by fire, and did not find that it made me any adequate compensation for such an abridgement of my liberty. I make little doubt but Noah was glad when he was enlarged from the ark; and we are sure that Jonah was, when he came out of the fish; and so was I to escape from the good sloop the Harriet.

In my last, I wrote you word that Mr. Perry was given over by his friends, and pronounced a dead man by his physician. Just when I had reached the end of the foregoing paragraph, he came in. His errand hither was to bring two letters, which I enclose; one is to yourself, in which he will give you, I doubt not, such an account both of his body and mind, as will make all that I might say upon those subjects superfluous. The only consequences of his illness seem to be, that he looks a little pale, and that though always a most excellent man, he is still more angelic than he was. Illness sanctified is better than health. But I know a man who has been a sufferer by a worse illness than his, almost these fourteen years, and who at present is only the worse for it.

Mr. Scott called upon us yesterday: he is much inclined to

set up a Sunday school, if he can raise a fund for the purpose. Mr. Jones has had one some time at Clifton; and Mr. Unwin writes me word that he has been thinking of nothing else day and night, for a fortnight. It is a wholesome measure, that seems to bid fair to be pretty generally adopted, and for the good effects that it promises, deserves well to be so. I know not, indeed, while the spread of the gospel continues so limited as it is, how a reformation of manners, in the lower class of mankind, can be brought to pass; or by what other means the utter abolition of all principle among them, moral as well as religious, can possibly be prevented. Heathenish parents can only bring up heathenish children: an assertion no where oftener or more clearly illustrated than at Olney; where children, seven years of age, infest the streets every evening with curses and with songs, to which it would be unseemly to give their proper epithet. Such urchins as these could not be so diabolically accomplished, unless by the connivance of their parents. It is well, indeed, if in some instances their parents be not themselves their instructors. Judging by their proficiency, one can hardly suppose any other. It is, therefore, doubtless an act of the greatest charity to snatch them out of such hands, before the inveteracy of the evil shall have made it desperate. Mr. Teedon, I should imagine, will be employed as a teacher, should this expedient be carried into effect. I know not, at least, that we have any other person among us so well qualified for the service. He is indisputably a Christian man, and miserably poor, whose revenues need improvement, as much as any children in the world can possibly need instruction.

I understand that Mr. Jones is in London; it is possible that you may have seen him, and if you have, are better acquainted with his present intentions respecting Lord Peterborough than myself. We saw him, not long since, when he talked of resigning his office immediately; but I hear that he was afterwards otherwise advised, and repented of his purpose. I think it great pity that he did. A thing that a man had better never have touched cannot too soon be relinquished. While his principal kept himself at a distance, his connexion with him was less offensive; but now to all who interest themselves in his conduct as a minister of the gospel, it is an offence

indeed. He seems aware of it, and we hope, therefore, will soon abandon it.

Mrs. Unwin hopes that a hare, which she sent before Mrs. Newton went her journey, arrived safe. By this week's coach she also sent three fowls and a ham, with cabbages, of whose safe arrival she will likewise be glad to hear. She has long been troubled with a pain in her side, which we take to be of the spasmodic kind, but is otherwise well. She joins with me in love to yourself and Mrs. Newton, and to the young ladies; neither do we forget Sally Johnson.

Believe me, my dear friend,
With true affection, yours, W. C.

Hannah desires me to give her duty to Miss Cunningham and to Miss Catlett.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR SIR, Oct. 11, 1785.

You began your letter with an apology for long silence, and it is now incumbent upon me to do the same; and the rather, as your kind invitation to Wargrave entitled you to a speedier answer. The truth is, that I am become, if not a man of business, yet a busy man, and have been engaged almost this twelvemonth in a work that will allow of no long interruption. On this account it was impossible for me to accept your obliging summons; and having only to tell you that I could not, it appeared to me as a matter of no great moment, whether you received that intelligence soon or late.

You do me justice, when you ascribe my printed epistle to you, to my friendship for you; though, in fact, it was equally owing to the opinion that I have of yours for me. Having, in one part or other of my two volumes, distinguished by name the majority of those few for whom I entertain a friendship, it seemed to me that it would be unjustifiable negligence to omit yourself; and if I took that step without communicating to you my intention, it was only to gratify myself the more, with the hope of surprising you agreeably. Poets are dangerous persons to be acquainted with, especially if a man have that in his character that promises to shine in verse. To that very circumstance it is owing, that you are now figuring away in *mine*. For, notwithstanding what you say on the subject of

honesty and friendship, that they are not splendid enough for public celebration, I must still think of them as I did before, —that there are no qualities of the mind and heart that can deserve it better. I can, at least for my own part, look round about upon the generality, and, while I see them deficient in those grand requisites of a respectable character, am not able to discover that they possess any other, of value enough to atone for the want of them.

I beg that you will present my respects to Mrs. Hill, and believe me Ever affectionately yours, WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Oct. 16, 1785.

To have sent a child to heaven is a great honour and a great blessing, and your feelings on such an occasion may well be such as render you rather an object of congratulation than of condolence. And were it otherwise, yet, having yourself free access to all the sources of genuine consolation, I feel that it would be little better than impertinence in me to suggest any. An escape from a life of suffering to a life of happiness and glory, is such a deliverance as leaves no room for the sorrow of survivors, unless they sorrow for themselves. We cannot, indeed, lose what we love without regretting it; but a Christian is in possession of such alleviations of that regret, as the world knows nothing of. Their beloveds, when they die, go they know not whither; and if they suppose them, as they generally do, in a state of happiness, they have yet but an indifferent prospect of joining them in that state hereafter. But it is not so with you. You both know whither your beloved is gone, and you know that you shall follow her; and you know also that in the mean time she is incomparably happier than yourself. So far, therefore, as she is concerned, nothing has come to pass but what was most fervently to be wished. I do not know that I am singularly selfish; but one of the first thoughts that your account of Miss Cunningham's dying moments and departure suggested to me, had self for its object. It struck me that she was not born when I sank into darkness, and that she is gone to heaven before I have emerged again. What a lot, said I to myself, is mine! whose helmet is fallen from my head, and whose sword from my hand, in the midst of the battle; who was stricken down to the earth when I least

expected it; who had just begun to cry victory! when I was defeated myself; and who have been trampled upon so long, that others have had time to conquer and to receive their crown, before I have been able to make one successful effort to escape from under the feet of my enemies. It seemed to me, therefore, that if you mourned for Miss Cunningham, you gave those tears to her to which I only had a right, and I was almost ready to exclaim, "I am the dead, and not she; you misplace your sorrows." I have sent you the history of my mind on this subject without any disguise; if it does not please you, pardon it at least, for it is the truth. The unhappy, I believe, are always selfish. I have, I confess, my comfortable moments; but they are like the morning dew, so suddenly do they pass away and are gone. I had a dream twelve years ago, before the recollection of which all consolation vanishes, and as it seems to me, must always vanish. But I will neither trouble you with my dream nor with any comments upon it; for, if it were possible, I should do well to forget that, the remembrance of which is incompatible with my comfort.

It should seem a matter of small moment to me, who never hear him, whether Mr. Scott shall be removed from Olney to the Lock, or no; yet, in fact, I believe that few interest themselves more in that event than I. He knows my manner of life, and has ceased long since to wonder at it. A new minister would need information, and I am not ambitious of having my tale told to a stranger. He would also, perhaps, think it necessary to assail me with arguments, which would be more profitably disposed of if he should discharge them against the walls of a tower. I wish, therefore, for the continuance of Mr. Scott. He honoured me so far as to consult me twice upon the subject. At our first interview, he seemed to discern but little in the proposal that entitled it to his approbation. But when he came the second time, we observed that his views of it were considerably altered. He was warm,—he was animated; difficulties had disappeared, and allurements had started up in their place. I could not say to him, Sir, you are naturally of a sanguine temper; and he that is so, cannot too much distrust his own judgement: but I am glad that he will *have* the benefit of yours. It seems to me however, that the *minister* who shall re-illume the faded glories of the Lock,

must not only practise great fidelity in his preaching, to which task Mr. Scott is perfectly equal, but must do it with much address; and it is hardly worth while to observe, that his excellence does not lie that way, because he is ever ready to acknowledge it himself. But I have nothing to suggest upon this subject that will be new to you, and therefore drop it; the rather, indeed, because I may reasonably suppose that by this time the point is decided.

I have reached that part of my paper which I generally fill with intelligence, if I can find any; but there is a great dearth of it at present; and Mr. Scott has probably anticipated me in all the little that there is. Lord Peterborough having dismissed Mr. Jones from his service, the people of Turvey have burnt him [Mr. Jones] in effigy, with a bundle of quickthorn under his arm. What consequences are to follow his dismission, is uncertain. His lordship threatens him with a lawsuit; and unless their disputes can be settled by arbitration, it is not unlikely that the profits of poor Jones's stewardship will be melted down at Westminster. He has laboured hard, and no doubt with great integrity, and has been rewarded with hard words and scandalous treatment.

Mr. Scott (which perhaps he may not have told you, for he did not mention it here) has met with similar treatment at a place in this country called Hinksey,[1] or by some such name. But he suffered in effigy for the Gospel's sake;—a cause in which I presume he would not be unwilling, if need were, to be burnt *in propriâ personâ.*

I have nothing to add, but that we are well, and remember you with much affection; and that I am, my dear friend,

Sincerely yours, W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, Oct. 22, 1785.

You might well suppose that your letter had miscarried, though in fact it was duly received. I am not often so long in arrear, and you may assure yourself that when at any time it happens that I am so, neither neglect nor idleness is the cause. I have, as you well know, a daily occupation,—forty lines to translate, a task which I never excuse myself when it

[1] Tingewick, near Buckingham, was the place where this insult was offered to Mr. Scott.

is possible to perform it. Equally sedulous I am in the matter of transcribing, so that between both, my morning and evening are for the most part completely engaged. Add to this, that though my spirits are seldom so bad but that I can write verse, they are often at so low an ebb as to make the production of a letter impossible. So much for a trespass which called for some apology, but for which to apologise further, would be to commit a greater trespass still.

I know not whether you saw my letter to Mr. Urban. It was printed in the Magazine for August, and produced in that for September a citation from Say's Essays, made by Mr. Nichols himself, of which Homer's celebrated moonlight night is the subject. Say's opinion of Pope's translation of that passage, confirms what I have said of it in my epistle. I may therefore reasonably conclude, that Nichols, who makes the quotation, is on my side also. I do not know that Pope's work was ever more roughly handled than by myself upon this occasion; yet although the Magazine be a field in which disputants upon all questions contend, no one has hitherto enlisted himself on Pope's behalf against me. The truth is, that on those points where I touched him, he is indefensible. Readers of the original know it; and all others must be conscious, that whether he deserves my censure, or deserves it not, the matter is not for them to meddle with. I am now in the twentieth book of Homer, and shall assuredly proceed, because the further I go the more I find myself justified in the undertaking: and in due time, if I live, shall assuredly publish. In the whole I shall have composed about forty thousand verses, about which forty thousand verses I shall have taken great pains, on no occasion suffering a slovenly line to escape me. I leave you to guess therefore whether, such a labour once achieved, I shall not determine to turn it to some account, and to gain myself profit if I can,—if not, at least some credit, for my reward.

I perfectly approve of your course with John. The most entertaining books are the best to begin with, and none in the world, so far as entertainment is concerned, deserves the preference to Homer. Neither do I know that there is any where to be found Greek of easier construction,—poetical Greek I *mean*; and as for prose, I should recommend Xenophon's *Cyropædia*. That also is a most amusing narrative, and ten

times easier to understand than the crabbed epigrams and scribblements of the minor poets, that are generally put into the hands of boys. I took particular notice of the neatness of John's Greek character, which (let me tell you) deserves its share of commendation; for to write the language legibly is not the lot of every man who can read it. Witness myself for one.

I like the little ode of Huntingford's that you sent me. In such matters we do not expect much novelty, or much depth of thought. The expression is all in all, which to me at least appears to be faultless. Yet Huntingford's Monostrophics have been my ratsbane for these six months past. Not a Review has been published, I think, (a Monthly one at least,) of which they have not occupied a third part. The learned Poet, it seems, had the misfortune to meet with a more learned Critic. The Critic found many faults in his Greek. The Poet justified. The Critic replied; and though this controversy was conducted on the part of both with the utmost good temper, mine, I must confess, has been sometimes a little ruffled by the length of it. I wish, said I to myself, that if men must needs write odes, they would write them in a language of which they are sure they are masters.

But oh! what is Huntingford to Robert Heron, Esq.? Have you seen that man's Letters of Literature? If you have, then say with me, I beseech you, that you have seen the vainest, the cruellest, the most unjustifiable attack upon the most eminent writers that was ever made. I should long to see him well and handsomely chastised, if I did not account him beneath the notice of any man equal to the task, But he that can find no beauties in Virgil, and, which is worse, not a single instance of the sublime in Scripture, must either belie himself, or be of all creatures that live, the most destitute of taste and sensibility.

Adieu, my dear William! We are well, and you and yours are ever the objects of our affection. W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

I AM glad that I always loved you as I did. It releases me from any occasion to suspect that my present affection for you is indebted for its existence to any selfish considerations. No

I am sure I love you disinterestedly, and for your own sake, because I never thought of you with any other sensations than those of the truest affection, even while I was under the influence of a persuasion that I should never hear from you again. But with my present feelings, superadded to those that I always had for you, I find it no easy matter to do justice to my sensations. I perceive myself in a state of mind similar to that of the traveller, described in Pope's Messiah, who, as he passes through a sandy desert, starts at the sudden and unexpected sound of a waterfall. You have placed me in a situation new to me, and in which I feel myself somewhat puzzled how I ought to behave. At the same time that I would not grieve you, by putting a check upon your bounty, I would be as careful not to abuse it, as if I were a miser, and the question not about your money, but my own.

Although I do not suspect that a secret to you, my cousin, is any burthen, yet having maturely considered that point, since I wrote my last, I feel myself altogether disposed to release you from the injunction, to that effect, under which I laid you. I have now made such a progress in my translation, that I need neither fear that I shall stop short of the end, nor that any rider of Pegasus should overtake me. Therefore if at any time it should fall fairly in your way, or you should feel yourself invited to say I am so occupied, you have my poetship's free permission. Dr. Johnson read, and recommended my first volume. W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Nov. 5, 1785.

WERE it with me as in days past, you should have no cause to complain of my tardiness in writing. You supposed that I would have accepted your packet as an answer to my last; and so indeed I did and felt myself overpaid,—but though a debtor, and deeply indebted too, had not wherewithal to discharge the arrear. You do not know nor suspect what a conquest I sometimes gain, when I only take up the pen with a design to write. Many a time have I resolved to say to all my few correspondents,—"I take my leave of you for the present; if I live to see better days, you shall hear from me again." I have been *driven to* the very verge of this measure; and, even upon this *occasion,* was upon the point of desiring Mrs. Unwin to be-

e my substitute. She, indeed, offered to write in my l; but fearing that you would understand me to be even ıe than I am, I rather chose to answer for myself. So h for a subject with which I could easily fill the sheet, but which I have occupied too great a part of it already. It ne that I should thank you, and return you Mrs. Unwin's ks for your Narrative. I told you, in my last, in what ner I felt myself affected by the abridgement of it con- ɔd in your letter; and have therefore only to add, upon point, that the impression made upon me by the relation rge was of a like kind. I envy all that live in the enjoy- t of a good hope, and much more all who die to enjoy fruit of it: but I recollect myself in time; I resolved not ıuch that chord again, and yet was just going to trespass ı my resolution. As to the rest, your history of your ɔy niece is just what it should be,—clear, affectionate, and ı; worthy of her, and worthy of yourself. How much e beneficial to the world might such a memorial of an un- wn, but pious and believing child, eventually prove, would supercilious learned condescend to read it, than the history ll the kings and heroes that ever lived! But the world has ɔbjects of admiration, and God has objects of his love. se make a noise and perish; and these weep silently for a t season, and live for ever. I had rather have been your e, or the writer of her story, than any Cæsar that ever ıdered.

he vanity of human attainments was never so conspicuously nplified as in the present day. The sagacious moderns e discoveries, which, how useful they may prove to them- es I know not; certainly they do no honour to the an- ts. Homer and Virgil have enjoyed, (if the dead have any yments,) an unrivalled reputation as poets through a long ession of ages: but it is now shrewdly suspected that ıer did not compose the poems for which he has been so applauded; and it is even asserted by a certain Robert ɔn, Esq. that Virgil never wrote a line worth reading. He pitiful plagiary; he is a servile imitator, a bungler in his , and has not a thought in his whole work that will bear ıination. In short, he is any thing but what the literati wo thousand years have taken him to be—a man of ge- , and *a fine writer.* *I fear* that Homer's case is desperate.

After the lapse of so many generations, it would be a difficult matter to elucidate a question which time and modern ingenuity together combine to puzzle. And I suppose that it were in vain for an honest plain man to enquire, "If Homer did not write the Iliad and the Odyssey, who did?" The answer would undoubtedly be—"It is no matter; he did not: which is all that I undertook to prove." For Virgil, however, there still remains some consolation. The very same Mr. Heron, who finds no beauties in the Æneid, discovers not a single instance of the sublime in Scripture. Particularly, he says, speaking of the Prophets, that Ezekiel, although the filthiest of all writers, is the best of them. He, therefore, being the first of the learned who has reprobated even the style of the Scriptures, may possibly make the fewer proselytes to his judgement of a heathen writer. For my own part, at least, had I been accustomed to doubt whether the Æneid were a noble composition or not, this gentleman would at once have decided the question for me; and I should have been immediately assured, that a work must necessarily abound in beauties that had the happiness to displease a censurer of the Word of God. What enterprises will not an inordinate passion for fame suggest? It prompted one man to fire the Temple of Ephesus; another, to fling himself into a volcano; and now has induced this wicked and unfortunate squire either to deny his own feelings, or to publish to all the world that he has no feelings at all.

This being the fifth of November, is the worst of all days in the year for letter-writing. Continually called upon to remember the bonfire, one is apt to forget every thing else. The boys at Olney have likewise a very entertaining sport, which commences annually upon this day: they call it Hockey; and it consists in dashing each other with mud, and the windows also, so that I am forced to rise now and then, and to threaten them with a horsewhip, to preserve our own. We know that the Roman boys whipped tops, trundled the hoop, and played at tennis; but I believe we nowhere read that they delighted in these filthy aspersions: I am inclined, therefore, to give to the slovenly but ingenious youths of Olney full credit for the invention. It will be well if the Sunday school may civilize them to a taste for more refined amusements. That measure is so far in forwardness that a subscription is made: but it amounts, I am told, to no more than nineteen pounds; a feeble

beginning, which, as taxes are continually growing, promises no long duration.

We have lost our noble neighbours: Lord Peterborough and his lady are gone; and gone to return no more. Mr. Throckmorton was so much displeased with his steward, Mr. Morley, for letting them his house, that he had almost dismissed him from his service. He is not likely, indeed, to keep it long: having made too free with spirituous liquors, his legs begin to swell, and he is going fast into a dropsy.

Mr. Jones and Lord Peterborough have parted at last; and, after many bickerings, have parted upon amicable terms. Jones having delivered in an honest account refused to falsify it to the prejudice of his own reputation, and his master threatened him with a lawsuit. But finding him inflexible, and not to be intimidated, he gave him his hand, treated him as a friend, and admitted him into his confidence. It is well for little folks that great folks are apt to be somewhat capricious; they would otherwise, perhaps, be at all times insolent and oppressive alike.

Mr. Scott, is pestered with anonymous letters, but he conducts himself wisely; and the question whether he shall go to the Lock or not, seems hasting to a decision in the affirmative.

We are tolerably well: and Mrs. Unwin adds to mine her affectionate remembrances of yourself and Mrs. Newton.

Yours, my dear friend, W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Nov. 7, 1785.

YOUR time being so much occupied as to leave you no opportunity for a word more than the needful, I am the more obliged to you that you have found leisure even for that, and thank you for the note above acknowledged.

I know not at present what subject I could enter upon, by which I should not put you to an expense of moments that you can ill spare: I have often been displeased when a neighbour of mine, being himself an idle man, has delivered himself from the burthen of a vacant hour or two, by coming to repose his idleness upon me. Not to incur, therefore, and deservedly, the blame that I have charged upon him, by interrupting you, who are certainly a busy man, whatever may be the case with

myself, I shall only add that I am, with my respects to Mrs. Hill, Affectionately yours, WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Nov. 9, 1785.

YOU desired me to return your good brother the bishop's charge as soon as I conveniently could, and the weather having forbidden us to hope for the pleasure of seeing you, and Mrs. Bagot with you, this morning, I return it now, lest, as you told me that your stay in this country would be short, you should be gone before it could reach you.

I wish, as you do, that the charge in question could find its way into all the parsonages in the nation. It is so generally applicable, and yet so pointedly enforced, that it deserves the most extensive spread. I find in it the happiest mixture of spiritual authority, the meekness of a Christian, and the good manners of a gentleman. It has convinced me, that the poet, who, like myself, shall take the liberty to pay the author of such valuable admonition a compliment, shall do at least as much honour to himself as to his subject. Yours, W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAR COUSIN, Olney, Nov. 23, 1785.

I AM obliged to you for having allotted your morning to me, and not less obliged to you for writing, when the opportunity you had set apart for that purpose had been almost entirely consumed by others. It cost me some little deliberation to decide whether I should answer by this night's post, or whether I should wait till I could tell you that the wine is arrived: but to say the truth, I had it not in my power to wait; so I cut the matter short at once by determining to believe that the frequency of my letters will not make them a burthen to you. I did not know or suspect that Providence had so much good in store for me in the present life, as I promise myself now from the renewal of our intimacy. But it seems that my calculations upon that subject were erroneous; it is renewed: and I look forward to the permanence of it with the pleasantest expectations, and resolve to do all I can to deserve your punctual correspondence, by being as punctual as possible myself. *How easily are resolutions made and kept, when the whole heart is in them!*

Fifty things present themselves to me that I want to say, and while each pleads for the preference, they all together so distract my choice that I hardly know with which to begin.

I thank you, my dearest cousin, for your medical advice. I have tried other wines, but never could meet with any that I could drink constantly but port, without being the worse for it. And with respect to the quantity, that is a point that habit so effectually decides, that after many years practice, a limitation to a certain stint becomes in a manner necessary. When I have drank what I always drink, I can feel that more would disgust me. I have, indeed, a most troublesome stomach, and which does not improve as I grow older. I have eaten nothing for some time past that it has not quarrelled with, from my bread and butter in the morning down to the egg that I generally make my supper. It constrains me to deny myself some things that I am fond of, and some that are in a degree necessary to health, or that seem to be so. Green tea I have not touched these twenty years, or only to be poisoned by it: but bohea, which never hurts me, is so good a substitute, that I am perfectly well satisfied upon that head. Less easy, however, do I find it to reconcile myself to an almost total abstinence from all vegetables, which yet I have been obliged to practise for some time. But enough, and too much by half, upon a subject that shall never again engross so large a portion of the paper that I devote to you.

You supposed in a former letter that Mrs. Cowper, of Devonshire Street, has written to me since I saw the rest of the family. Not so, my dear. Whatever intelligence she gave you concerning me, she had it from the Newtons, whom she visits. Yourself were the last of my female relations that I saw before I went to St. Alban's. You do not forget, I dare say, that you and Sir Thomas called upon me in my chamber, a very few days before I took leave of London: then it was that I saw you last, and then it was that I said in my heart, upon your going out at the door, Farewell! there will be no more intercourse between us for ever. But Providence has ordered otherwise, and I cannot help saying once more, how sincerely I rejoice that he has. It were pity that, while the same world holds us, we, who were in a manner brought up together, should not love each other to the last. We do, however, and we do so in spite of a long separation; and although that separation should be for life, yet will we love each other.

I intended to have been very merry when I began, but I stumbled unawares upon a subject that made me otherwise; but if I have been a little sad, yet not disagreeably so to myself. That you admire Mr. Pitt, my dear, may be, for aught I know, as you say it is, a very shining part of your character; but a more illustrious part of it, in my account, is your kindness and affection to me. Sweet self, you know, will always claim a right to be first considered, a claim which few people are much given to dispute. Upon the subject of politics you may make me just what you please. I am perfectly prepared to adopt all your opinions, for living when and as I do, it is impossible that I should have any decided ones of my own. My mind, therefore, is as much a *carte blanche* in this particular as you can wish. Write upon it what you please. I know well that I honoured his father, and that I have cut capers before now for victories obtained under his auspices; and although capering opportunities have become scarce since he died, yet I am equally ready even now to caper for his son when a reasonable occasion should offer. As to the King, I love and honour him upon a hundred accounts; and have, indeed, but one quarrel with him in the world; which is, that after having hunted a noble and beautiful animal, till he takes it perhaps at last in a lady's parlour, he in a few days turns it up and hunts it again. When stags are followed by such people as generally follow them, it is very well: their pursuers are men who do not pretend to much humanity, and when they discover none, they are perfectly consistent with themselves; but I have a far different opinion of the character of our King: he is a merciful man, and should therefore be more merciful to his beast.

I admire and applaud your forgery, but your last was performed in such haste that the date did not much resemble the direction. I imagine, however, that, all things considered, the Post Office, should they detect your contrivance, would not be much disposed to take notice of it. It is a common practice, but seldom so justifiably practised as by you.[1]

My dearest cousin, if you give me wine, there is no good reason wherefore you should also be at the expense of bottles, of which we could not possibly make any other use than to furnish the rack with them, where the cats would break them.

[1] The letter, no doubt, was franked in her father's name.

I purpose, therefore, to return the hamper charged with the same number that it brings, by your permission. The difference will be sixteen shillings in the price of the wine.

Our post comes in on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Sundays; on the two former days about breakfast time, and on Sundays, at this season at least, in the afternoon. Adieu, my dear; I am never happier, I think, than when I am reading your letters, or answering them. Ever yours, WM. C.

P.S. The kindness of that concern you take in the affairs of my stomach calls upon me to be a little more particular. I have tried Madeira, and find that it heats me in the night. Sherry I understand to be a creator of appetite, which I do not want. I am taking bark and steel, from which I expect much. Mine is merely a case of relaxation.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Nov. 28, 1785.

In the first place, thanks for the cloth and muslin, which gave great satisfaction; and in the second, ditto thanks for your intelligence concerning my handsome escape, so far at least, out of the paws of the critics. You may rejoice with me, and I dare say will, that the door of patronage begins to open. My dear cousin, Lady Hesketh's connexions are many and polite; she undertakes, as you will see, to further my subscription with a readiness and warmth that leave me no room to doubt that my Proposals will be circulated as far as she can drive them. But this is not all. The Rev. Walter Bagot, who called on me two years ago, induced to it mainly by my first publication, in like manner induced by my second, has called upon me again. He has been here twice, and we expect him again with his wife, by her own desire, on Thursday or Friday next. At his last visit I imparted to him my design to publish a new English Homer by subscription. No man could receive such intelligence with more pleasure, nor is it possible to say with what a glow of friendship, or with how much uncommon alacrity he offered himself to my service, together with all his interest, which is important both for its weight and its extent. So far so good.

I am not immediately in need of the Odyssey: my correspondence with Lady Hesketh having been very frequent, has

of late engaged much of my time, and is likely to do so. The day before yesterday I began Book XXIII. But send Ulysses when you can.

I would gladly gratify you by sending the part of the translation which you desire, although I could not commit it to the post without much anxiety, having, in fact, no other copy; for the first copy bears very little resemblance to the second all the way through. But there is an insuperable difficulty. If you reflect a moment you will be sensible of it. The quire being written book-fashion, the same sheet contains as much of what you do not want as of what you do: for instance, if I send you page one, I must also send you pages forty-one and forty-two, which are found on the corresponding side of the same sheet. I could not, therefore, send you enough, unless I sent you more than a frank would carry. We shall be truly glad to hear that Miss Shuttleworth is better. Adieu.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, Nov. 30.

YOUR kindness reduces me to a necessity, (a pleasant one, indeed,) of writing all my letters in the same terms: always thanks,—thanks at the beginning, and thanks at the end. It is, however, I say, a pleasant employment when those thanks are indeed the language of the heart: and I can truly add, that there is no person on earth whom I thank with so much affection as yourself. You insisted that I should give you my genuine opinion of the wine. By the way, it arrived without the least damage or fracture, and I finished the first bottle of it this very day. It is excellent, and though the wine which I had been used to drink, was not bad, far preferable to that. The bottles will be in town on Saturday. I am enamoured of the desk and its contents before I see them. They will be most entirely welcome. A few years since I made Mrs. Unwin a present of a snuff-box—a silver one; the purchase was made in London by a friend; it is of a size and form that make it more fit for masculine than feminine use. She therefore with pleasure accepts the box which you have sent,—I should say with the greatest pleasure. And I, discarding the leathern trunk that I have used so long, shall succeed to the possession *of hers.* She says, Tell Lady Hesketh that I truly love and

honour her. Now, my cousin, you may depend upon it, as a most certain truth, that these words from her lips are not an empty sound. I never in my life heard her profess a regard for any one that she felt not. She is not addicted to the use of such language upon ordinary occasions; but when she speaks it, speaks from the heart. She has baited me this many a day, even as a bear is baited, to send for Dr. Kerr. But, as I hinted to you upon a former occasion, I am as mulcish as most men are, and have hitherto most gallantly refused; but what is to be done now?—If it were uncivil not to comply with the solicitations of one lady, to be unmoved by the solicitations of two would prove me to be a bear indeed. I will, therefore, summon him to consideration of said stomach, and its ailments, without delay, and you shall know the result.—I have read Goldsmith's Traveller and his Deserted Village, and am highly pleased with them both, as well for the manner in which they are executed, as for their tendency, and the lessons that they inculcate.

Mrs. Unwin said to me a few nights since, after supper, "I have two fine fowls in feeding, and just fit for use; I wonder whether I should send them to Lady Hesketh?" I replied, Yes, by all means! and I will tell you a story that will at once convince you of the propriety of doing so. My brother was curate on a time to Mr. Fawkes, of Orpington, in Kent: it was when I lived in the Temple. One morning, as I was reading by the fireside, I heard a prodigious lumbering at the door. I opened it, and beheld a most rural figure, with very dirty boots, and a great coat as dirty. Supposing that my great fame as a barrister had drawn upon me a client from some remote region, I desired him to walk in. He did so, and introduced himself to my acquaintance by telling me that he was the farmer with whom my brother lodged at Orpington. After this preliminary information he unbuttoned his great coat, and I observed a quantity of long feathers projected from an inside pocket. He thrust in his hand, and with great difficulty extracted a great fat capon. He then proceeded to lighten the other side of him, by dragging out just such another, and begged my acceptance of both. I sent them to a tavern, where they were dressed, and I with two or three friends, whom I invited to the feast, found them incomparably better than any

fowls that we had ever tasted from the London coops. Now, said I to Mrs. Unwin, it is likely that the fowls at Olney may be as good as the fowls at Orpington, therefore send them; for it is not possible to make so good a use of them in any other way.

My dear, I have another story to tell you, but of a different kind. At Westminster School I was much intimate with Walter Bagot, a brother of Lord Bagot. In the course, as I suppose, of more than twenty years after we left school, I saw him but twice;—once when I called on him at Oxford, and once when he called on me in the Temple. He has a brother who lives about four miles from hence, a man of large estate. It happened that soon after the publication of my first volume, he came into this country on a visit to his brother. Having read my book, and liking it, he took that opportunity to renew his acquaintance with me. I felt much affection for him, and the more because it was plain that after so long a time he still retained his for me. He is now at his brother's; twice has he visited me in the course of the last week, and this morning he brought Mrs. Bagot with him. He is a good and amiable man, and she a most agreeable woman. At this second visit I made him acquainted with my translation of Homer: he was highly pleased to find me so occupied, and with all that glow of friendship that would make it criminal in me to doubt his sincerity for a moment, insisted upon being employed in promoting the subscription, and engaged himself and all his connexions, which are extensive, and many of them of high rank, in my service. His chariot put up at an inn in the town while he was here, and I rather wondered that at his departure he chose to walk to his chariot, and not to be taken up at the door; but when he had been gone about a quarter of an hour his servant came with a letter his master had written at the inn, and which, he said, required no answer. I opened it, and found as follows;—

MY GOOD FRIEND, Olney, Nov. 30, 1785.

You will oblige me by accepting this early subscription to your Homer, even before you have fixed your plan and price; which when you have done, if you will send me a parcel of your subscription papers, I will endeavour to circulate them

among my friends and acquaintance as far as I can. Health and happiness attend you.

Yours ever, WALTER BAGOT.

N. B. It contained a draft for twenty pounds.

My dearest cousin, for whom I feel more than I can say, I once more thank you for all; which reminds me by the way of thanking you in particular for your offer of oysters. I am very fond of them, and few things agree better with me, when they are stewed without butter. You may perceive that I improve upon your hands, and grow less and less coy in the matter of acceptance continually.

In a letter of Mr. Unwin's to his mother he says thus: "I have been gratified to-day by the high character given of my friend's poem in the Critical Review." So far, therefore, I have passed the pikes. The Monthly Critics have not yet noticed me.

Adieu, my faithful, kind, and consolatory friend!

Ever, ever yours, WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Dec. 3, 1785.

I AM glad to hear that there is such a demand for your last Narrative. If I may judge of their general utility by the effect that they have heretofore had upon me, there are few things more edifying than death-bed memoirs. They interest every reader, because they speak of a period at which all must arrive, and afford a solid ground of encouragement to survivors to expect the same, or similar support and comfort, when it shall be their turn to die.

I also am employed in writing narrative, but not so useful. Employment, however, and with the pen, is, through habit, become essential to my well-being; and to produce always original poems, especially of considerable length, is not so easy. For some weeks after I had finished the Task, and sent away the last sheet corrected, I was through necessity idle, and suffered not a little in my spirits for being so. One day, being in such distress of mind as was hardly supportable, I took up the Iliad; and merely to divert attention, and with no more preconception of what I was then entering upon, than I have at this moment of what I shall be doing this day twenty years hence, translated the twelve first lines of it. The same neces-

sity pressing me again, I had recourse to the same expedient, and translated more. Every day bringing its occasion for employment with it, every day consequently added something to the work: till at last I began to reflect thus:—The Iliad and Odyssey together consists of about forty thousand verses. To translate these forty thousand verses will furnish me with occupation for a considerable time. I have already made some progress, and I find it a most agreeable amusement. Homer, in point of purity, is a most blameless writer; and, though he was not an enlightened man, has interspersed many great and valuable truths throughout both his poems. In short, he is in all respects a most venerable old gentleman, by an acquaintance with whom no man can disgrace himself. The literati are all agreed to a man, that, although Pope has given us two pretty poems under Homer's titles, there is not to be found in them the least portion of Homer's spirit, nor the least resemblance of his manner. I will try, therefore, whether I cannot copy him somewhat more happily myself. I have at least the advantage of Pope's faults and failings, which, like so many buoys upon a dangerous coast, will serve me to steer by, and will make my chance for success more probable. These and many other considerations, but especially a mind that abhorred a vacuum as its chief bane, impelled me so effectually to the work, that ere long, I mean to publish proposals for a subscription to it, having advanced so far as to be warranted in doing so. I have connexions, and no few such, by means of which I have the utmost reason to expect that a brisk circulation may be procured; and if it should prove a profitable enterprise, the profit will not accrue to a man who may be said not to want it. It is a business such as it will not, indeed, lie much in your way to promote; but, among your numerous connexions, it is possible that you may know some who would sufficiently interest themselves in such a work to be not unwilling to subscribe to it. I do not mean—far be it from me—to put you upon making hazardous applications, where you might possibly incur a refusal, that would give you though but a moment's pain. You know best your own opportunities and powers in such a cause. If you can do but little, I shall esteem it much; and if you can do nothing, I am sure that it will not be for want of a will.

I have lately had three visits from my old school-fellow

Mr. Bagot, a brother of Lord Bagot, and of Mr. Chester of Chichely. At his last visit he brought his wife with him, a most amiable woman, to see Mrs. Unwin. I told him my purpose, and my progress. He received the news with great pleasure; immediately subscribed a draft of twenty pounds; and promised me his whole heart, and his whole interest, which lies principally among people of the first fashion.

My correspondence has lately also been renewed with my dear cousin Lady Hesketh, whom I ever loved as a sister, (for we were in a manner brought up together,) and who writes to me as affectionately as if she were so. She also enters into my views and interests upon this occasion with a warmth that gives me great encouragement. The circle of *her* acquaintance is likewise very extensive; and I have no doubt that she will exert her influence to its utmost possibilities among them. I have other strings to my bow, (perhaps, as a translator of Homer, I should say, to my lyre,) which I cannot here enumerate; but, upon the whole, my prospect seems promising enough. I have not yet consulted Johnson upon the occasion, but intend to do it soon.

My spirits are somewhat better than they were. In the course of the last month, I have perceived a very sensible amendment. The hope of better days seems again to dawn upon me; and I have now and then an intimation, though slight and transient, that God has not abandoned me for ever.

We have paid Nat. Gee his interest, and I enclose his acknowledgement. His last was so effectually mislaid that we have never found it. Mrs. Unwin, who sends her love, begs that you will pay out of that sum for the newspapers, and remit, if you can think of it, the few shillings that will remain, by the first that shall call upon you in his way to Olney. She is sorry that she forgot the greens.

This last paragraph must be considered as in a parenthesis, for I am going back to the subject of the preceding, viz. myself. Having been for some years troubled with an inconvenient stomach; and lately, with a stomach that will digest nothing without help; and we having reached the bottom of our own medical skill, into which we have dived to little or no purpose; I have at length consented to consult Dr. Kerr, and expect to see him in a day or two. Engaged as I am, and am likely to be, so long as I am capable of it, in writing for the

press, I cannot well afford to entertain a malady that is su an enemy to all mental operations.

The morning is beautiful, and tempts me forth into t garden. It is all the walk that I can have at this season, b not all the exercise. I ring a peal every day upon the dum bells.

I am, my dear friend, most truly,
Yours and Mrs. Newton's, W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAR COUSIN, Olney, Dec. 6, 1785.

I WRITE not *upon* my desk, but *about* it. Having in vain e pected it by the waggon that followed your letter, I again e pected it by the next; and thinking it likely that it mig arrive last night at Sherrington, I sent a man over thither tl morning, hoping to see him return with it; but again I s disappointed. I have felt an impatience to receive it that y yourself have taught me, and now think it necessary to let y know that it is not come, lest it should perhaps be detained London, by the negligence of somebody to whom you mig entrust the packing of it, or its carriage to the inn.

I shall be obliged to be more concise than I choose to when I write to you, for want of time to indulge myself writing more. How, will you say, can a man want time, w lives in the country, without business, and without neighbou who visits nobody, and who is visited himself so seldom? My de I have been at the races this morning, and have another let to write this evening; the post sets out at seven, and it is n drawing near to six. A fine day, you will say, for the rac and the better, no doubt, because it has rained continua ever since the morning. At what races do you suppose tl I have been? I might leave you to guess, but loving you t well to leave you under the burthen of an employment tl must prove for ever vain, I will even tell you, and keep y no longer in suspense. I have been at Troy, where the pr cipal heroes of the Iliad have been running for such a pr as our jockeys would disdain to saddle a horse for; and I assure you they acquitted themselves most nobly, though kettle and a frying-pan were to reward their labours.

I never answered your question concerning my strong p *tiality to* a common. I well remember making the speech

which you remind me, and the very place where I made it was upon a common, in the neighbourhood of Southampton, the name of which, however, I have forgot. But I perfectly recollect that I boasted of the sagacity that you mention just after having carried you over a dirty part of the road that led to it. My nostrils have hardly been regaled with those wild odours from that day to the present. We have no such here. If there ever were any such in this country, the enclosures have long since destroyed them; but we have a scent in the fields about Olney, that to me is equally agreeable, and which, even after attentive examination, I have never been able to account for. It proceeds, so far as I can find, neither from herb, nor tree, nor shrub: I should suppose therefore that it is in the soil. It is exactly the scent of amber when it has been rubbed hard, only more potent. I have never observed it except in hot weather, or in places where the sun shines powerfully, and from which the air is excluded. I had a strong poetical desire to describe it when I was writing the Common-scene in the Task, but feared lest the unfrequency of such a singular property in the earth, should have tempted the reader to ascribe it to a fanciful nose, at least to have suspected it for a deliberate fiction.

I have been as good as my word, and have sent for the doctor; but having left him the whole week to choose out of, am uncertain on what day I shall fall under his consideration. I have been in his company. He is quite a gentleman, and a very sensible one; and as to skill in his profession, I suppose that he has few superiors.

Mrs. Unwin, (who begs to be mentioned to you with affectionate respect,) sits knitting my stockings at my elbow, with a degree of industry worthy of Penelope herself. You will not think this an exaggeration when I tell you that I have not bought a pair these twenty years, either of thread, silk, or worsted.

Adieu, my most beloved cousin; if you get this before I have an answer to my last, let me soon have an answer to them both. Truly yours, WM. COWPER.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAR COUSIN, Dec. 7.

At this time last night I was writing to you, and now I am

writing to you again. Had our correspondence been renewed a year ago, it is possible that, having found a more agreeable employment, it might never have occurred to me to translate Homer for my amusement. I have no doubt that my friend Bagot will do his utmost to circulate my Proposals. There is a warmth in his manner, and he takes an interest in the success of my enterprise that leaves me without excuse if I should doubt it. But his sphere of influence and yours are entirely distinct. He will recommend me to the men, and you, I suppose, principally to the ladies. The literati will probably have some curiosity to see in what manner I have conducted an attempt in which Pope went before me; but after all a translation of Homer must be chiefly a lady's book. It just presents itself to me to ask if Mr. Arnott, whose name I have not heard these many years, except from my own lips, be of your connexions? He, I should suppose, has pretty extensive ones himself, and for certain reasons would not unwillingly contribute what he could to the futherance of a work undertaken by a man who bears my name. But all these matters I leave entirely to your discretion, as secure both of that and your zeal to serve me, as if I were at your side throughout all the business. By the way, a neighbour of ours being this day at Newport, saw a letter addressed to me in the window of the inn, and delivered it to me while I was at dinner. It proved to be a letter from Mr. Bagot, which he had left there in his way home, in hope that it would find a bearer. It is conceived in terms altogether worthy of the friendship that he professes for me, and contains a fresh assurance of his exertions in my favour as soon as I shall have sent him my proposals. He is a man of taste and of learning, and sees as plainly as I that there is a fair opening for such a work. My intention is to write to Johnson, my publisher, in the course of a few days, in order to settle with him the necessary preliminaries; which done, I shall order him to put the Proposals to the press immediately. The season is favourable,—London is full, or will be so by the time when they shall be ready, which will hardly be till after the holidays, and by that time, if nothing hinders, I shall have finished the Iliad. I shall then revise it carefully, comparing it all the way with the original, and shall have given it the last hand probably by the month of March. It is likewise probable that by the month of March we shall have felt

our ground a little, and be able to form a reasonable judgement how far the subscription will be likely to fill. For so expensive a business must not be finally determined upon till that be known. If the subscription should fail of the needful amount, I am but where I was, and shall have nothing to do but to return the money, and to comfort myself with reflecting that I have not thrown away another year in translating the Odyssey also. But though not naturally addicted to much rashness in making conclusions favourable to myself, I have a certain lightness of heart upon the subject, that encourages me to hope for, and to expect a very different event.

My dear, you say not a word about the desk in your last, which I received this morning. I infer from your silence that you supposed it either at Olney or on its way thither, and that you expected nothing so much as that my next would inform you of its safe arrival;—therefore, where can it possibly be? I am not absolutely in despair about it, for the reasons that I mentioned last night; but to say the truth, I stand tottering upon the verge of it. I write, and have written these many years, upon a book of maps, which I now begin to find too low and too flat, though till I expected a better desk, I found no fault with *them*. See and observe how true it is, that by increasing the number of our conveniences, we multiply our wants exactly in the same proportion! neither can I at all doubt that if you were to tell me that all the men in London of any fashion at all, wore black velvet shoes with white roses, and should also tell me that you would send me such, I should dance with impatience till they arrived. Not because I care one farthing of what materials my shoes are made, but because any shoes of your sending would interest me from head to foot.

I have never had the pleasure to see Mr. Jekyll, and probably never shall. I have been repeatedly at Gayhurst; but we went only to amuse ourselves with a walk in the pleasure-grounds when the family were out. I was last year in company with Mrs. Wright. We met at Mr. Throckmorton's, and were both highly pleased with her; but Mr. Wright himself is such a keen sportsman that he would doubtless find me a most insipid animal, who have not the least relish of what he admires so much. For the same reason as well as for some others, I have never had a connexion in the visiting way with

any other of the gentlemen in the country. With Mr. Throckmorton indeed I had liked to have formed acquaintance last year, but he left the country soon after we began to know each other, and is in general so little at home that I have no room left to suppose I shall ever know him better.

Mrs. Unwin, my dearest cousin, is *overgoved*, (you remember that word), that the *pullen*, (you remember that also,) proved so good. She begs me also to say how sensible she is of your kind offer to execute any of her commissions in town; but to say *how* sensible she is of it, would take up more room than I can spare at present, for which reason I decline it. I allot the rest of my paper to Dr. Kerr, whom I shall expect to see to-morrow, or shall conclude that my letter has not reached him. Good night, therefore, my dear! I will fill up the little space that remains when I shall either have to tell you that I have seen him, or must write to him again. I am on the same account obliged to postpone my answer to certain passages in your last, to another opportunity.

Thursday Evening.

Oh that this letter had wings, that it might fly to tell you that my desk, the most elegant, the compactest, the most commodious desk in the world, and of all the desks that ever were or ever shall be, the desk that I love the most, is safe arrived. Nay, my dear, it was actually at Sherrington, when the waggoner's wife, (for the man himself was not at home,) croaked out her abominable *No!* yet she examined the bill of lading, but either did it so carelessly, or as poor Dick Madan used to say, with such an *ignorant eye*, that my name escaped her. My precious cousin, you have bestowed too much upon me. I have nothing to render you in return, but the affectionate feelings of a heart most truly sensible of your kindness. How pleasant it is to write upon such a green bank! I am sorry that I have so nearly reached the end of my paper. I have now however only room to say that Mrs. Unwin is delighted with her box, and bids me do more than thank you for it. What can I do more at this distance but say that she loves you heartily, and that so do I? The pocket-book is also the completest that I ever saw, and the watch-chain the most brilliant.

Adieu for a little while. Now for Homer.

My dear, yours, WM. C.

N. B. I generally write the day before the post sets out, which is the thing that puzzles you. I do it that I may secure time for the purpose, and may not be hurried. On this very day twenty-two years ago I left London.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Dec. 10, 1785.

WHAT you say of my last volume gives me the sincerest pleasure. I have heard a like favourable report of it from several different quarters, but never any (for obvious reasons) that has gratified me more than yours. I have a relish for moderate praise, because it bids fair to be judicious; but praise excessive, such as our poor friend ——'s, (I have an uncle also who celebrates me exactly in the same language;)—such praise is rather too big for an ordinary swallow. I set down nine-tenths of it to the account of family partiality. I know no more than you what kind of a market my book has found; but this I believe, that had not Henderson died, and had it been worth my while to have given him a hundred pounds to have read it in public, it would have been more popular than it is. I am at least very unwilling to esteem John Gilpin as better worth than all the rest that I have written and he has been popular enough.

Your sentiments of Pope's Homer agree perfectly with those of every competent judge with whom I have at any time conversed about it. I never saw a copy so unlike the original. There is not, I believe, in all the world to be found an uninspired poem so simple as those of Homer; nor in all the world a poem more bedizened with ornaments then Pope's translation of them. Accordingly, the sublime of Homer in the hands of Pope becomes bloated and tumid, and his description tawdry. Neither had Pope the faintest conception of those exquisite discriminations of character for which Homer is so remarkable. All his persons, and equally upon all occasions, speak in an inflated and strutting phraseology, as Pope has managed them; although in the original, the dignity of their utterance, even when they are most majestic, consists principally in the simplicity of their sentiments and of their language. Another censure I must needs pass upon our Anglo-Grecian, out of many that obtrude themselves upon me, but for which I have neither time to spare, nor room; which is, that

with all his great abilities he was defective in his feelings to a degree that some passages in his own poems make it difficult to account for. No writer more pathetic than Homer, because none more natural: and because none less natural than Pope in his version of Homer, therefore than he none less pathetic. But I shall tire you with a theme with which I would not wish to cloy you before hand.

If the great change in my experience, of which you express so lively an expectation, should take place, and whenever it shall take place, you may securely depend upon receiving the first notice of it. But whether you come with congratulations, or whether without them, I need not say that you and yours will always be most welcome here. Mrs. Unwin's love both to yourself and to Mrs. Newton joins itself as usual, and as warmly as usual, to that of

Yours, my dear friend,
affectionately and faithfully, WM. COWPER.

The following this moment occurs to me as a possible motto for the Messiah, if you do not think it too sharp :—

—— *Nunquam inducunt animum cantare*, rogati;
Injussi, *nunquam desistunt*.

TO LADY HESKETH.

DEAREST COUSIN, Thursday, Dec. 15, 1785.

My desk is always pleasant, but never so pleasant as when I am writing to you. If I am not obliged to you for the thing itself, at least I am for your having decided the matter against me, and resolving that it should come in spite of all my objections. Before it arrived, Mrs. Unwin had spied out for it a place that exactly suits it. A certain fly-table in the corner of the room, which I had overlooked, affords it a convenient stand when it is not wanted, and it is easily transferred to a larger when it is. If I must not know to whom I am principally indebted for it, at least let me entreat you to make my acknowledgements of gratitude and love. As to my frequent use of it, I will tell you how that matter stands. When I was writing my first volume, and was but just beginning to emerge from a state of melancholy that had continued some years, (from which, by the way, I do not account myself even now delivered,) Mrs. Unwin insisted on my relinquishing the pen, apprehending consequences injurious to my health. When ladies insist, you

know, there is an end of the business; obedience on our part becomes necessary. I accordingly obeyed, but having lost my fiddle, I became pensive and unhappy; she therefore restored it to me, convinced of its utility, and from that day to this I have never ceased to scrape. Observe, however, my dear, that I scrape not always. My task that I assign myself is to translate forty lines a day; if they pass off easily I sometimes make them fifty, but never abate any part of the allotted number. Perhaps I am occupied an hour and a half, perhaps three hours; but generally between two and three. This, you see, is labour that can hurt no man; and what I have translated in the morning, in the evening I transcribe.

Imagine not that I am so inhuman as to send you into the field with no coadjutor but Mr. Bagot. He is indeed one of my great dependencies, but I have others, and not inconsiderable ones besides. Mr. Unwin is of course hearty in my cause, and he has several important connexions. I have, by his means originally, an acquaintance, though by letters only, with Mr. Smith, member for Nottingham. My whole intercourse with my bookseller has hitherto been carried on through the medium of his parliamentary privilege. He is pleased to speak very handsomely of my books, and, I doubt not, will assist my subscription with ardour. John Thornton the great, who together with his three sons, all three in parliament, has, I suppose, a larger sweep in the city than any man, will, I have reason to hope, be equally zealous in my favour. Mr. Newton, who has a large influence in that quarter also, will, I know, serve me like a brother. I have also exchanged some letters with Mr. Bacon, the statuary, whose connexions must needs be extensive, and who, if I may judge from the sentiments that he expresses towards me, will not be backward in my service. Neither have I any doubt but that I can engage Lord Dartmouth. These, my dearest cousin, except the last, (and I mention it for your greater comfort,) are all, to a man, Pittites. Mr. Smith, in particular, is one of the minister's most intimate friends, and was with him when the turnpike man had like to have spoiled him for a premier for ever. All this I have said by way of clapping you on the back, not wondering that your poor heart ached at the idea of being almost a solitary Lady Errant on the occasion.

With *respect to the enterprise* itself, there are certain points

of delicacy that will not suffer me to make a public justification of it. It would ill become me avowedly to point out the faults of Pope in a preface, and would be as impolitic as indecent. But to you, my dear, I can utter my mind freely. Let me premise, however, that you answered the gentleman's inquiry, whether in blank verse or not, to a marvel. It is even so: and let some critics say what they will, I aver it, and will for ever aver it, that to give a just representation of Homer in rhyme, is a natural impossibility. Now for Pope himself: I will allow his whole merit. He has written a great deal of very musical and sweet verse in his translation of Homer, but his verse is not universally such; on the contrary, it is often lame, feeble, and flat. He has, besides, occasionally a felicity of expression peculiar to himself; but it is a felicity purely modern, and has nothing to do with Homer. Except the Bible, there never was in the world a book so remarkable for that species of the sublime that owes its very existence to simplicity, as the works of Homer. He is always nervous, plain, natural. I refer you to your own knowledge of his copyist for a decision upon Pope's merits in these particulars. The garden in all the gaiety of June is less flowery than his Translation. Metaphors of which Homer never dreamt, which he did not seek, and which probably he would have disdained if he had found, follow each other in quick succession like the sliding pictures in a show box. Homer is, on occasions that call for such a style, the easiest and most familiar of all writers; a circumstance that escaped Pope entirely, who takes most religious care that he shall everywhere strut in buckram. The speeches of his heroes are often animated to a degree that Pope no doubt accounted unmannerly and rude, for he has reduced numbers of them that are of that character to the perfect standard of French good-breeding. Shakespeare himself did not excel Homer in discrimination of character, neither is he more attentive to exact consistence and preservation of it throughout. In Pope, to whatever cause it was owing, whether he did not see it, or seeing it, accounted it an affair of no moment, this great beauty is almost absolutely annihilated. In short, my dear, there is hardly any thing in the world so unlike another, as Pope's version of Homer to the original. Give me a great corking pin that I may stick your faith upon my sleeve. There —it is done. Now assure yourself, upon the credit of a man who made Homer much his study in his youth, and who is

perhaps better acquainted with Pope's translation of him than almost any man, having twenty-five years ago compared them with each other line by line throughout; upon the credit of a man, too, who would not for the world deceive you in the smallest matter, that Pope never entered into the spirit of Homer, that he never translated him, I had almost said, did not understand him: many passages it is literally true that he did not. Why, when he first entered on his task, did he, (as he did, by his own confession,) for ever dream that he was wandering in unknown ways, that he was lost upon heaths and forests, and awoke in terror? I will tell you, my dear, his dreams were emblems of his waking experience; and I am mistaken, if I could not go near to prove that at his first setting out, he knew very little of Greek, and was never an adept in it, to the last. Therefore, my beloved cousin, once more take heart. I have a fair opportunity to acquire honour; and if when I have finished the Iliad, I do not upon cool consideration think that I have secured it, I will burn the copy.

A hundred things must go unanswered, but not the oysters unacknowledged, which are remarkably fine. Again I leave space for Kerr, not having seen him yet. I cannot go to him now, lest we *should meet in the midway between.*

Saturday.

I must now huddle up twenty matters in a corner. No Kerr yet: a report prevails in our town that he is very ill, and I am very sorry if he is. I were no better than a beast could I forget to thank you for an order of oysters through the season. I love you for all your kindnesses, and for this among the rest. I wrote lately to Johnson on the subject of Homer. He is a knowing man in his trade, and understands booksellers' trap as well as any man. He wishes me not to publish by subscription, but to put my copy into his hands. He thinks he can make me such proposals as I shall like. I shall answer him to-day, and not depart from my purpose. But I consider his advice as a favourable omen. The last post brought me a very obliging letter from the abovesaid Mr. Smith. I shall answer it to-day, and shall make my intended application for his interest in behalf of my subscription. I always take care to have sufficient exercise every day. When the weather forbids walking, I ring a thousand bob-majors upon the dumb-bells. You would be delighted to see the performance. Again, I say that I love

you, and I do so in particular for the interest that you took in the success of the passages that you say were read in the evening party that you mention. I know the friendly warmth of your heart, and how valuable a thing it is to have a share in it. The hare was caught by a shepherd's-dog, that had not the fear of the law before his eyes; was transferred by the shepherd to the clerk of the parish, and by him presented to us. Mrs. Unwin is ever deeply sensible of your kind remembrances of her. Her son is sometimes in Town, and if you permit him, will, I doubt not, rejoice to give a morning rap at your door, upon the first intimation of such permission from me, whenever opportunity shall offer.

Now farewell, my dearest cousin, and deservedly my most beloved friend, farewell.

With true affection yours, WM. COWPER.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

THE long-expected visitor has at length appeared. On Sunday, at two o'clock, in came Kerr, having taken the very first opportunity that great pain, and indisposition, the consequence of it, afforded him. The poor man has been a great sufferer, as his looks declare, and when I had heard the whole matter I did not wonder at it. The original hurt, indeed, was trivial, but having occasion, the next morning after the squirrel bit him, to lance a tumour for a patient in the infirmary, the contents of which were infectious, and the matter of it happening to come in contact with the small puncture that Scrug had made in his finger, a terrible inflammation ensued, and he expected nothing less than that the finger must have been cut off. Even when he was here, he was in pain, and had a considerable swelling upon his shoulder, and another under his arm. I relate the story for his justification, because it accounts but too satisfactorily for his delay.

As for myself, he catechized me on the subject of my own case with so much accuracy of intelligence as proved him perfect master of all my sensations and uneasinesses, before I told them. Which having done, he in a moment enabled me to understand it also. My stomach, he says, of which all my complaint is made, is in itself a very good stomach, and by no means in fault *originally*. But it has the misfortune to belong

to a habit, the juices of which are in an acrid and unhealthy state; that these juices occasion a little lurking fever, from which I am never free, and being transmitted into the stomach through the coats of it, make a regular digestion impossible. That all these mischiefs, from the first to the last, proceed from an obstruction of insensible perspiration. I am therefore to proceed as follows: imprimis, in order to set the said insensible discharge going again, I am to furnish myself with half a dozen flannel waistcoats,—not to be worn all at once, my dear, far from it, but one at a time, and next my personage: secondly, I am to take (oh terrible!) an emetic weekly; when I find myself a little better, every fortnight, and less frequently as matters mend with me, till at length I shall get excused for one in three months: thirdly, he has prescribed for me a tincture, a spoonful of which I am to take in peppermint tea about noon, and another at going to bed. And lastly, I am to drink no wine at night, but, instead of my usual supper, am to regale myself with half a pint of oatmeal gruel, made very good with spice, and into which he graciously admits four table spoonfuls of brown port. I should have a restlessness in the night, he said, for about a fortnight perhaps, on foregoing the glass to which I had been always accustomed, but that then I should sleep the better for it. Herein, however, he has been happily a little mistaken, for I have used it two nights and have slept much more than usual. Thus you see, my dear, that drinking lying-in lady's liquor I am likely soon to be as well *as can be expected.*

Mrs. Unwin makes my caudle, and, by the Doctor's own desire, my tincture also; for he said she would be more exact than the apothecaries (in which he said true), and that much depended on exactness. It happens luckily enough that, being much a gardener, I have a hot-bed newly made, for something like a sand-heat being necessary, in order to digest the ingredients properly, and there being nothing of the sort at any of our physical people's in the town, a hot-bed is the only thing in the world to supply the deficiency. I am to let him know in about three weeks what progress I make in the way of amendment, and he will answer me; and when his business shall at any time bring him this way, will be sure to call.

And now, my dear, I have given you plentiful information upon the subject—must not however forget to add what it is a

comfort to me to know that you will be glad to hear, that when Mrs. Unwin asked him in my absence (for I happened to leave the room a moment) whether he thought I should soon recover health again, he answered that he saw no reason to doubt it.

[Part of this letter has been cut off.]

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Dec. 24, 1785.

You would have found a letter from me at Mr. Smith's, according to your assignation, had not the post, setting out two hours sooner than the usual time, prevented me. The Odyssey that you sent has but one fault, at least but one that I have discovered, which is, that I cannot read it. The very attempt, if persevered in, would soon make me as blind as Homer was himself. I am now in the last book of the Iliad; shall be obliged to you therefore for a more legible one by the first opportunity.

I wrote to Johnson lately, desiring him to give me advice and information on the subject of proposals for a subscription; and he desired me in his answer not to use that mode of publication, but to treat with him; adding, that he could make me such offers, as (he believed) I should approve. I have replied to his letter, but abide by my first purpose.

Having occasion to write to Mr. Smith, concerning his princely benevolence, extended this year also to the poor of Olney, I put in a good word for my poor self likewise, and have received a very obliging and encouraging answer. He promises me six names in particular, that (he says) will do me no discredit, and expresses a wish to be served with papers as soon as they shall be printed.

I meet with encouragement from all quarters, such as I find need of indeed in an enterprise of such length and moment, but such as at the same time I find effectual. Homer is not a poet to be translated under the disadvantage of doubts and dejection.

Let me sing the praises of the desk which my dear cousin has sent me. In general, it is as elegant as possible. In particular, it is of cedar, beautifully lacquered. When put together, it assumes the form of a handsome small chest, contains all sorts of accommodations, is furnished with cut glass for

ink and sand, and is hinged, handled, and mounted with silver. It is inlaid with ivory, and serves the purpose of reading-desk. It came stored with stationery of all sorts, and this splendid sheet is a part of it. The snuff box, a present to your mother, is also very handsome. French paper, with a gold hinge, and bordered with an inlay of *concatenated gold*, as the Gods call it, but as men, with a gold chain.

Your affectionate W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Dec. 24, 1785.

TILL I had made such a progress in my present undertaking, as to put it out of all doubt that, if I lived, I should proceed in, and finish it, I kept the matter to myself. It would have done me little honour to have told my friends that I had an arduous enterprise in hand, if afterwards I must have told them that I had dropped it. Knowing it to have been universally the opinion of the literati, ever since they have allowed themselves to consider the matter coolly, that a translation, properly so called, of Homer, is, notwithstanding what Pope has done, a desideratum in the English language, it struck me, that an attempt to supply the deficiency would be an honourable one; and having made myself, in former years, somewhat critically a master of the original, I was by this double consideration induced to make the attempt myself. I am now translating into blank verse the last book of the Iliad, and mean to publish by subscription.

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, Dec. 31, 1785.

YOU have learned from my last that I am now conducting myself upon the plan that you recommended to me in the summer. But since I wrote it, I have made still farther advances in my negotiation with Johnson. The proposals are adjusted. The proof-sheet has been printed off, corrected, and returned. They will be sent abroad as soon as I can make up a complete list of the personages and persons to whom I would have them sent; which in a few days I hope to be able to accomplish. Johnson behaves very well, at least according to my conception of the *matter, and seems* sensible that I have dealt liberally

with him. He wishes me to be a gainer by my labours, in his own words, "to put something handsome in my pocket," and recommends two large quartos for the whole. He would not (he says) by any means advise an extravagant price, and has fixed it at three guineas; the half, as usual, to be paid at the time of subscribing, the remainder on delivery. Five hundred names (he adds) at this price will put above a thousand pounds into my purse. I am doing my best to obtain them. I have written, I think, to all my quondam friends, except those that are dead, requiring their assistance. I have gulped and swallowed, and I have written to the Chancellor, and I have written to Colman. I now bring them both to a fair test. They can both serve me most materially if so disposed. Mr. Newton is warm in my service, and can do not a little. I have of course written to Mr. Bagot, who, when he was here, with much earnestness and affection entreated me so to do, as soon as I should have settled the conditions. If I could get Sir Richard Sutton's address, I would write to him also, though I have been but once in his company since I left Westminster, where he and I read the Iliad and Odyssey through together. I enclose Lord Dartmouth's answer to my application, which I will get you to show to Lady Hesketh, because it will please her. I shall be glad if you can make an opportunity to call on her, during your present stay in town. You observe therefore that I am not wanting to myself; he that is so, has no just claim on the assistance of others, neither shall myself have any cause to complain of me in other respects. I thank you for your friendly hints and precautions, and shall not fail to give them the guidance of my pen. I respect the public, and respect myself, and had rather want bread than expose myself wantonly to the condemnation of either. I hate the affectation so frequently found in authors, of negligence and slovenly slightness; and in the present case am sensible how especially necessary it is to shun them, when I undertake the vast and invidious labour of doing better than Pope has done before me. I thank you for all that you have said and done in my cause, and beforehand for all that you shall say and do hereafter. I am sure that there will be no deficiency on your part. In particular I thank you for taking such jealous care of my honour and respectability, when the Mann you mention applied for samples of my translation. When I deal in wine, cloth,

or cheese, I will give samples, but of verse never. No consideration would have induced me to comply with the gentleman's demand, unless he could have assured me that his wife had longed.

I have frequently thought with pleasure of the summer that you have had in your heart, while you have been employed in softening the severity of winter in behalf of so many who must otherwise have been exposed to it. I wish that you could make a general gaol-delivery, leaving only those behind who cannot elsewhere be so properly disposed of. You never said a better thing in your life, than when you assured Mr. Smith of the expediency of a gift of bedding to the poor of Olney. There is no one article of this world's comforts, with which, as Falstaff says, they are so heinously unprovided. When a poor woman, and an honest one, whom we know well, carried home two pair of blankets, a pair for herself and husband, and a pair for her six children; as soon as the children saw them, they jumped out of their straw, caught them in their arms, kissed them, blessed them, and danced for joy. An old woman, a very old one, the first night that she found herself so comfortably covered, could not sleep a wink, being kept awake by the contrary emotions, of transport on the one hand, and the fear of not being thankful enough on the other.

It just occurs to me, to say, that this manuscript of mine will be ready for the press, as I hope, by the end of February. I shall have finished the Iliad in about ten days, and shall proceed immediately to the revisal of the whole. You must, if possible, come down to Olney, if it be only that you may take the charge of its safe delivery to Johnson. For if by any accident it should be lost, I am undone,—the first copy being but a lean counterpart of the second.

Your mother joins with me in love and good wishes of every kind, to you, and all yours. Adieu, W. C.

TO THE REV. MATTHEW POWLEY, DEWSBURY, NEAR LEEDS[1].

DEAR SIR, [About 1786.]

You judge wisely, I believe; it is certainly best that we should cease to discuss a matter which neither you nor I are qualified

[1] For this Letter I am obliged to Mr. Clarke, of New Bond Street, to whom the original was given by Mr. Powley.

to adjust. It is very possible that I might misstate a circumstance which happened so long ago as last March twelvemonth, for I keep no letters, except such as are recommended for preservation by the importance of their contents, and consequently had none to refer to. By *important contents*, I mean what is commonly called *business* of some sort or other. In the destruction of all other epistles I consult the good of my friends; for I account it a point of delicacy not to leave behind me, when I die, such bundles of their communications as I otherwise should, for the inspection of I know not whom; and as I deal with theirs, for the very same reason, I most heartily wish them all to deal with mine. In fact, there seems to be no more reason for perpetuating or preserving what passes the pen in the course of a common correspondence, than what passes the lips in every day's conversation. A thousand folios of the latter are forgotten without any regret; and octavos, at least, of the former are frequently treasured till death, for no use whatever either to ourselves or others. They then, perhaps, go to the grocer's, and serve to amuse such of his customers as can read *written hand*, as they call it; or now and then, which is fifty times worse, they find their way to the press; a misfortune which never, at least seldom, fails to happen, if the deceased has been so unfortunate as to leave behind him a friend more affectionate to his memory than discreet in his choice of means to honour it.

I have run on thus long on a subject which I did not purpose to have mentioned when I began, merely for lack of news. You have received, I presume, by this time, Mr. Newton's last publication. I am reading it, but, as I read aloud, proceed not very rapidly, for I have not lungs to hold forth long; consequently I have made no great progress. The letters seem, however, by what I have seen of them, to hold out an example of a kind of which I have seen many, and which proves that a man may truly love and serve God, and yet have a snug little idol in a corner of his heart at the same time.

Is it possible to love *much* without loving *too much?* I never could. My experience has always answered—No.

Mr. Postlethwaite is come to serve for Mr. Bean, who has rambled westward, either to Bath or Bristol, or both. The *aforesaid* is about to publish a Grammar, in which he proposes *to go* beyond Lowth and Beattie. I am a subscriber, and you

may be so if you please. The price is to be three shillings. No great matter for settling the claims of twelve tenses. What they can be I am not at present able to imagine. Half of the number are as many, I believe, as I ever use myself.

Mrs. U. unites with me in love to you both, and I remain, sincerely yours, WM. COWPER.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAR,

I HAVE a neighbour at Newport Pagnell, the Rev. Mr. Bull, master of an academy there, a man of genius, fine taste, and consummate erudition,—I will say of him, that he has few if any superiors in learning in this country. He is my intimate friend, and dines with us once a fortnight the year round. To him I have already read a part of my translation, and should be ashamed to repeat the terms in which he praised it. If any difficulty should occur, he is my Delphic oracle, to which I shall resort. He is affectionately at my service, and his erudition is a bank upon which I can draw at pleasure. What interest he has is mine also, and he has already sent me names that will do honour to my list of subscribers.

Would you advise me to write to the Madans, Martin and Spencer? Of the former, I have heard that my Task is his theme in all companies; but that terrible book of his has made me more than half afraid to meddle with him, lest he should tease me for my opinion of it, in which case I should be obliged to execrate it even to his face. I gave him a broad look of disapprobation in my Progress of Error, and he was the only man who did not comprehend my purpose,—at least, he seemed insensible of it. I have learned from good authority that his connexions are most of them broken, and that since the publication, he has lived perforce pretty much to himself. So far, therefore, as he alone is concerned, it might not be worth while to trouble him; but my dear Doctor of Buttercram would, I dare say, serve me to his utmost, and must have pretty extensive interest, especially among the clergy. Yet to him I cannot make application, unless I apply to Martin also, without hurting the latter more than I would wish.—Advise me.

Does dedication to King or Queen import any thing like an obligation for Author to present Author's book with Author's

own hands? If so, woe to mine Authorship, for it cannot be done. I would not dedicate to the Emperor of the Moon upon those conditions, though he should promise me Mount Saint Catherine for my reward.

You did perfectly well, my dear, to make Task take the lead of his elder brother, when their attendance on the General was in question. The first volume is a confession of my faith, concerning which he will probably not feel himself greatly interested; but the second, giving some account of my manner of life, together with other diverting matters, may possibly please him. I shall be glad if it should, for I know him to be a man of excellent taste; but at the same time do not expect him to say much.

Hours and hours and hours have I spent in endeavours altogether fruitless to trace the writer of the letter that I send, by a minute examination of the character, and never did it strike me till this moment that your father wrote it. In the style I discover him, in the scoring of the emphatical words—his never-failing practice, in the formation of many of the letters, and in the adieu! at the bottom so plainly, that I could hardly be more convinced had I seen him write it. Tell me, my dearest cousin, if you are not of my mind? How much am I bound to love him if it be so! Always much, but in that case, if possible, more than ever.

Farewell, thou beloved daughter of my beloved anonymous uncle.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, Olney, Monday, Jan. 2, 1786.

Be under no concern about me or my stomach. The remedy is certainly a most detestable affair, but when taken early in the morning, and without slip-slops, is attended with less labour than could be supposed.

If I did not know that you have a better taste than ninety-nine readers in a hundred, whether of your sex or ours, I should have less pleasure than I have in your approbation. One thing is to be considered, I did not always read Pope's translation with so critical an eye as lately; if, therefore, I spy blemishes that escape you, it is not to be ascribed to my better judgement, but to that closeness of attention that the occasion *naturally* inspires. I well remember when the lines which

have charmed you so long, delighted me as much; and had I not at last examined them by the light of Homer's lamp, their defects, to this moment, had been hidden from me; such a fascinating command of language was Pope endued with. But Homer's accuracy of description, and his exquisite judgement never, never failed him. He never, I believe, in a single instance sacrificed beauty to embellishment. He does not deal in hyperbole, (a figure so frequently occurring in his translator, that one would imagine it Homer's favourite one;) accordingly, when he describes nature, whether in man or in animal, or whether nature inanimate, you may always trust him for the most consummate fidelity. It is his great glory that he omits no striking part of his subject, and that he never inserts a tittle that does not belong to it. Oh! how unlike some describers that I have met with, of modern days, who smother you with words, words, words, and then think that they have copied nature; when all the while nature was an object either not looked at, or not sufficiently: as if a painter, having a beautiful woman to draw, should give you, indeed, something like the outline of her face, but should fill it up with all the colours of the rainbow.

Your letter, my dearest cousin, gave me the greatest pleasure: it is full of matter that could not fail to do so. So indeed are all yours; for which reason it is that I ever wait with impatience for them. But I was especially pleased with what you say of General Cowper. Before I say more about him, let me premise that I have followed your good counsel, and that an epistle to him, of pretty handsome length, will set out by the same post that takes charge of this. The subjects of it are merely an explanation of my motives to this enterprise, and an application to him for his interest and assistance.

I know not how it could happen that my brother should have been so misinformed, but misinformed he must have been, and on the following occasion. Very soon after I had taken up my quarters at Mr. Unwin's at Huntingdon, I received a letter from your dear father, giving me to understand, though in the gentlest terms, and in such as *he* was sure to choose, that the family were not a little displeased at having learned that I kept a servant, and that I *maintained* a boy whom I had *carried thither* with me from St. Alban's. I have *not room here to relate* what passed between me and my uncle,

nor the reasons by which my conduct in those two articles had been determined. It is sufficient to say, that I did not alter my plan, though my uncle told me, as softly as he could, that there was danger lest the offence taken by my relations should operate to the prejudice of my income. I cannot proceed in my narrative without taking the opportunity to say, that at this moment it was, though I had not been ten months in the family, that Mrs. Unwin generously offered me my place under her roof, with all the same accommodations, (and undertook to manage that matter with her husband,) at half the stipulated payment. You may be sure that I made my brother privy to this business. Soon after my uncle and I had exchanged two or three letters about it, and I had ceased to hear any more of the matter, my brother went to town, where his stay was short, and when I saw him next, he gave me the following intelligence. That my cousin, mentioned above, had been the mover of this storm; that finding me inflexible, he had convened the family on the occasion, had recommended it to them not to give to one who knew so little how to make a right use of their bounty, and declared, for his own part, that he would not; and that he had accordingly withdrawn his contribution. My brother added, however, that my good friend Sir Thomas had stepped into his place, and made good the deficiency. Being thus informed—or, as it seems now, misinformed, you will not wonder, my dear, that I no longer regarded the Colonel as my friend, or that I have not inquired after him from that day to the present. But when, speaking of him, you express, yourself thus—*who, you know, has been so constantly your friend,*—I feel myself more than reconciled to him, I feel a sincere affection for him; convinced that he could not have acted towards me as my brother had heard, without your knowledge of it.

I have a word or two more to say on the same subject. While this troublesome matter was in agitation, and I expected little less than to be abandoned by the family, I received an anonymous letter, in a hand entirely strange to me, by the post. It was conceived in the kindest and most benevolent terms imaginable, exhorting me not to distress myself with fears lest the threatened event should take place, for that whatever reduction of my income might happen, the defect should be supplied by a person who loved me tenderly and approved my

conduct. I wish I knew who dictated this letter: I have seen, not long since, a style most excessively like it.

How kind are you, my cousin, to think for me as you do. Propose what you will, and I am prepared to adopt it, for you have given me no counsel yet, of which I have not instantly seen the propriety. My dedicatory powers, (which what they may be I know not,) are perfectly disengaged. Of all patrons upon earth I should choose a Lady-patron, and of all ladies to whom I can properly dedicate, Lady Spencer. Should I dedicate to a Lord, by giving the preference to one, I might offend two; for I hope not to have less than three in my train, —Dartmouth, Bagot, Thurlow. To the last-mentioned of this noble triumvirate I have written, but do not much expect an answer, for he writes, as I am told, to nobody. But then I have so contrived that his silence shall stand for consent. The answer of Lord Dartmouth to my application I have sent to Unwin, who, I hope, will have shown it to you by the time that this letter reaches you. I have great pleasure in the thought of your interview with him; and Mrs. Unwin is only sorry that she cannot put her eyes into her son's head while he is with you. He intends to be in London to-day. Possibly indeed he may not be able to call on you to-morrow, but I make little doubt that he will before he returns.

I have so managed that the General cannot possibly suspect me of having been directed to write to him. I conclude that if he be not in town himself, there will yet be somebody in his house to receive the letter. Where is his country house? and, is Mrs. Cowper living?

This has been one of my terrible days, and I begin to feel myself exhausted. You never had a correspondent before who, when he was about to write to you, prepared himself for it by an emetic. This, however, as it has happened, is the second time that I have done so.

Yours, my beloved cousin, with Mrs. Unwin's affectionate respects, WM. COWPER.

My proposals will be ready for publication in a very few days. I design writing by this post to Johnson, on purpose to set the press to work.

Adieu! May every thousand years of your life be happier than the *foregoing*.

We are eating the second barrel of *Our Lady's* oysters, which are excellent.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Jan. 10. 1786.

It gave me great pleasure that you found my friend Unwin, what I was sure you would find him, a most agreeable man. I did not usher him in with the marrow-bones and cleavers of high-sounding panegyric, both because I was certain that whatsoever merit he had, your discernment would mark it, and because it is possible to do a man material injury by making his praise his harbinger. It is easy to raise expectation to such a pitch, that the reality, be it ever so excellent, must necessarily fall below it.

I hold myself much indebted to Mr. ———, of whom I have the first information from yourself, both for his friendly disposition towards me, and for the manner in which he marks the defects in my volume. An author must be tender indeed to wince on being touched so gently. It is undoubtedly as he says, and as you and my uncle say. You cannot be all mistaken, neither is it at all probable that any of you should be so. I take it for granted therefore that there are inequalities in the composition, and I do assure you, my dear, most faithfully, that if it should reach a second edition, I will spare no pains to improve it. It may serve me for an agreeable amusement perhaps when Homer shall be gone and done with. The first edition of poems has generally been susceptible of improvement. Pope, I believe, never published one in his life that did not undergo variations; and his longest pieces, many. I will not observe, that inequalities there must be always, and in every work of length. There are level parts of every subject, parts which we cannot with propriety attempt to elevate. They are by nature humble, and can only be made to assume an awkward and uncouth appearance by being mounted. But, again, I take it for granted that this remark does not apply to the matter of your objection. You were sufficiently aware of it, before, and have no need that I should suggest it as an apology, could it have served that office, but would have made it for me yourself. In truth, my dear, had *you* known in what anguish of mind I wrote the whole of that *poem,* and under what perpetual interruptions from a cause

that has since been removed, so that sometimes I had not an opportunity of writing more than three lines at a sitting, you would long since have wondered as much as I do myself, that it turned out any thing better than Grub Street.

My cousin, give yourself no trouble to find out any of the Magi to scrutinize my Homer. I can do without them: and if I were not conscious that I have no need of their help, I would be the first to call for it. Assure yourself that I intend to be careful to the utmost line of all possible caution, both with respect to language and versification. I will not send a verse to the press, that shall not have undergone the strictest examination.

As subscription is surely on every account the most eligible mode of publication. When I shall have emptied the purses of my friends, and of their friends, into my own, I am still free to levy contributions upon the world at large, and I shall then have a fund to defray the expenses of a new edition. I have ordered Johnson to print the proposals immediately, and hope that they will kiss your hands before the week is expired.

I have had the kindest letter from Josephus that I ever had. He mentioned my purpose to one of the masters of Eton, who replied, that "such a work is much wanted."

Affectionately yours, W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, Jan. 14, 1786.

I AM glad that you have seen Lady Hesketh. I knew that you would find her every thing that is amiable and elegant. Else, being my relation, I would never have shown her to you. She also was delighted with her visitor, and expects the greatest pleasure in seeing you again; but is under some apprehensions that a tender regard for the drum of your ear may keep you from her. Never mind! you have two drums; and if she should crack both, I will buy you a trumpet.

General Cowper having much pressed me to accompany my proposals with a specimen, I have sent him one. It is taken from the twenty-fourth book of the Iliad, and is part of the interview between Priam and Achilles. Tell me, if it be possible, for any man to tell me,—why did Homer leave off at the burial of Hector? Is it possible that he could be determined to it by a conceit, so little worthy of him, as that, having made the

number of his books completely the alphabetical number, he would not for the joke's sake proceed any farther? Why did he not give us the death of Achilles, and the destruction of Troy? Tell me also, if the critics, with Aristotle at their head, have not found that he left off exactly where he should; and that every epic poem, to all generations, is bound to conclude with the burial of Hector? I do not in the least doubt it. Therefore, if I live to write a dozen epic poems, I will always take care to bury Hector, and to bring all matters at that point to an immediate conclusion.

I had a truly kind letter from Mr. Smith, written immediately on his recovery from the fever. I am bound to honour James's powder, not only for the services it has often rendered to myself, but still more for having been the means of preserving a life ten times more valuable to society than mine is ever likely to be.

You say—"why should I trouble you with my troubles?" I answer—"Why not? What is a friend good for, if we may not lay one end of the sack upon his shoulders, while we ourselves carry the other?"

You see your duty to God, and your duty to your neighbour; and you practise both with your best ability. Yet a certain person accounts you blind. I would that all the world were so blinded even as you are! But there are some in it, who, like the Chinese, say—"We have two eyes; and other nations have but one!" I am glad however that in your one eye you have sight enough to discover that such censures are not worth minding.

I thank you heartily for every step you take in the advancement of my present purpose.

Contrive to pay Lady H. a long visit, for she has a thousand things to say. Yours, my dear William, W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Jan. 14, 1786.

You never suffered your sermons to interfere with our correspondence, much less ought I to permit my poetry to do so. Neither do I; for though I have many unanswered letters, at least several, and am at this time particularly intent upon the *preparation* of the Iliad for the press, these are not the reasons *why I am* at this time shorter than usual. I told you, I believe,

that I have been obliged to put my stomach under the care of a physician. A part of the discipline that he has enjoined me is an emetic every ten days or a fortnight. This happens to be the very day dedicated to that exercise, and the abominable drug not choosing to return the way it went, has kept me in a state of continual sickness, so that I am at present altogether unqualified to do what I have here undertaken.

My proposals are already printed. I ought rather to say, that they are ready for printing; having near ten days ago returned the correction of the proof. But a cousin of mine, and one who will, I dare say, be very active in my literary cause, (I mean General Cowper,) having earnestly recommended it to me to annex a specimen, I have accordingly sent him one, extracted from the latter part of the last book of the Iliad, and consisting of a hundred and seven lines. I chose to extract it from that part of the poem, because if the reader should happen to find himself content with it, he will naturally be encouraged by it to hope well of the part preceding. Every man who can do any thing in the translating way is pretty sure to set off with spirit; but in works of such a length, there is always danger of flagging near the close.

My subscription, I hope, will be more powerfully promoted than subscriptions generally are. I have a warm and affectionate friend in Lady Hesketh; and one equally disposed, and even still more able to serve me, in the General above-mentioned. The Bagot family all undertake my cause with ardour; and I have several others, of whose ability and good-will I could not doubt without doing them injustice. It will, however, be necessary to bestow much time on the revisal of this work, for many reasons; and especially, because he who contends with Pope upon Homer's ground, can, of all writers, least afford to be negligent.

Mr. Scott brought me as much as he could remember of a kind message from Lord Dartmouth; but it was rather imperfectly delivered. Enough of it, however, came to hand to convince me that his Lordship takes a friendly interest in my success. When his Lordship and I sat side by side, in the sixth form at Westminster, we little thought that in process of time, one of us was ordained to give a new translation of Homer. Yet, at that very time, it seems, I was laying the foundation of *this superstructure.*

We were greatly pleased with your account of Mr. W. May your new disciple's conduct ever do honour to his principles, and to the instructions of the spiritual counsellor whom he hath chosen. Mr. Unwin in his last letter takes notice of the change in him that you have spoken of. Your letter is at this moment in the flames, according to your desire.

Many thanks for oysters, and much love upon all accounts, to you and yours. Adieu, my friend, W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Jan. 15, 1786.

I HAVE just time to give you an hasty line to explain to you the delay that the publication of my proposals has unexpectedly encountered, and at which I suppose that you have been somewhat surprised.

I have a near relation in London and a warm friend in General Cowper; he is also a person as able as willing to render me material service. I lately made him acquainted with my design of sending into the world a new Translation of Homer, and told him that my papers would soon attend him. He soon after desired that I would annex to them a specimen of the work. To this I at first objected, for reasons that need not be enumerated here, but at last acceded to his advice; and accordingly the day before yesterday I sent him a specimen. It consists of one hundred and seven lines, and is taken from the interview between Priam and Achilles in the last book. I chose to extract from the latter end of the poem, and as near to the close of it as possible, that I might encourage a hope in the readers of it, that if they found it in some degree worthy of their approbation they would find the former parts of the work not less so. For if a writer flags any where, it must be when he is near the end.

My subscribers will have an option given them in the proposals respecting the price. My predecessor in the same business was not quite so moderate..... You may say perhaps, (at least if your kindness for me did not prevent it, you would be ready to say,) "It is well;—but do you place yourself on a level with Pope?" I answer, or rather *should* answer—"By no means,—not as a poet; but as a translator of Homer, if I did not expect and believe that I should even surpass him, why have I meddled with this matter at all? If I confess inferiority, *I reprobate* my own undertaking."

When I can hear of the rest of the bishops, that they preach and live as your brother does, I will think more respectfully of them than I feel inclined to do at present. They may be learned, and I know that some of them are; but your brother, learned as he is, has other more powerful recommendations. Persuade him to publish his poetry, and I promise you that he shall find as warm and sincere an admirer in me as in any man that lives.

Yours, my dear friend, very affectionately, W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, Jan. 16, 1786.

I HAVE sent, as I hope you have heard by this time, a specimen to my good friend the General. To tell you the truth, I begin to be ashamed of myself that I had opposed him in the only two measures he recommended, and then assured him that I should be glad of his advice at all times. Having put myself under a course of strict self-examination upon this subject, I found at last that all the reluctance I had felt against a compliance with his wishes, proceeded from a principle of shame-facedness at bottom, that had insensibly influenced my reasonings, and determined me against the counsel of a man whom I knew to be wiser than myself. Wonderful as it may seem, my cousin, yet it is equally true, that although I certainly did translate the Iliad with a design to publish it when I had done, and although I have twice issued from the press already, yet I do tremble at the thought, and so tremble at it that I could not bear to send out a specimen, because, by doing so, I should appear in public a good deal sooner than I had purposed. Thus have I developed my whole heart to you, and if you should think it at all expedient, have not the least objection to your communicating to the General this interpretation of the matter. The specimen has suffered a little through my too great zeal of amendment; in one instance, at least, it will be necessary to restore the original reading. And by the way I will observe that a scrupulous nicety is a dangerous thing. It often betrays a writer into a worse mistake than it corrects, sometimes makes a blemish where before there was none, and is almost always fatal to the spirit of the performance.

You do not ask me, my dear, for an explanation of what I

could mean by *anguish of mind*, and by *the perpetual ruptions* that I mentioned. Because you *do not* ask, and b your reason for not asking consists of a delicacy and t ness peculiar to yourself, for that very cause I will te A wish so suppressed is more irresistible than many plainly uttered. Know then that in the year 73 th scene that was acted at St. Alban's, opened upon me a Olney, only covered with a still deeper shade of melan and ordained to be of much longer duration. I was su reduced from my wonted rate of understanding to an childish imbecility. I did not indeed lose my senses lost the power to exercise them. I could return a r answer even to a difficult question, but a question was sary, or I never spoke at all. This state of mind was a panied, as I suppose it to be in most instances of the with misapprehension of things and persons that mad very untractable patient. I believed that every body hat and that Mrs. Unwin hated me most of all; was con that all my food was poisoned, together with ten th megrims of the same stamp. I would not be more c stantial than is necessary. Dr. Cotton was consulted replied that he could do no more for me than might be at Olney, but recommended particular vigilance, lest I attempt my life:—a caution for which there was the g occasion. At the same time that I was convinced o Unwin's aversion to me, I could endure no other comp The whole management of me consequently devolved up and a terrible task she had; she performed it, howeve a cheerfulness hardly ever equalled on such an occasion I have often heard her say, that if ever she praised God life it was when she found that she was to have all the l She performed it accordingly, but, as I hinted once very much to the hurt of her own constitution. It thirteen years in little more than a week, since this seized me. Methinks I hear you ask,—your affection will, I know, make you wish to do so,—Is it remove reply, in great measure, but not quite. Occasionally much distressed, but that distress becomes continual frequent, and I think less violent. I find writing, and *ally* poetry, my best remedy. Perhaps, had I understood *I had* never written verse, but had lived upon fiddle-stri

d. It is better however as it is. A poet may, if he ses, be of a little use in the world, while a musician, the t skilful, can only divert himself and a few others. I have emerging gradually from this pit. As soon as I became ble of action, I commenced carpenter, made cupboards, s, stools. I grew weary of this in about a twelvemonth, addressed myself to the making of birdcages. To this loyment succeeded that of gardening, which I intermingled h that of drawing, but finding that the latter occupation ined my eyes, I renounced it, and commenced poet. I have en you, my dear, a little history in shorthand; I know that will touch your feelings, but do not let it interest them too much. *In the year when I wrote the Task,* (for it occupied me about a year,) *I was very often most supremely unhappy,* and am under God indebted in good part to that work for not having been much worse. You did not know what a clever ellow I am, and how I can turn my hand to any thing.

I perceive that this time I shall make you pay double postge, and there is no help for it. Unless I write myself out ow, I shall forget half of what I have to say. Now therefore the interruptions at which I hinted.—There came a lady o this country, by name and title Lady Austen, the widow the late Sir Robert Austen. At first she lived with her ster, about a mile from Olney; but in a few weeks took dgings at the vicarage here. Between the vicarage and the ck of our house are interposed, our garden, an orchard, and e garden belonging to the vicarage. She had lived much in France, was very sensible, and had infinite vivacity. She took a great liking to us, and we to her. She had been used to a great deal of company, and we, fearing that she would find such a transition into silent retirement irksome, contrived to give her our agreeable company often. Becoming continually more and more intimate, a practice obtained at length of our dining with each other alternately every day, Sundays excepted. In order to facilitate our communication, we made doors in the two garden-walls above-said, by which means we considerably shortened the way from one house to the other, and could meet when we pleased without entering the town at all, a measure the rather expedient, because in winter the town is abominably dirty, and she kept no carriage. On her first settlement in our *neighbourhood,* I made it my particular business,

(for at that time I was not employed in writing, having published my first volume, and not begun my second,) to pay my devoirs to her ladyship every morning at eleven. Customs very soon become laws. I began the "Task,"—for she was the lady who gave me the Sofa for a subject. Being once engaged in the work, I began to feel the inconvenience of my morning attendance. We had seldom breakfasted ourselves till ten, and the intervening hour was all the time that I could find in the whole day for writing; and occasionally it would happen that the half of that hour was all that I could secure for the purpose. But there was no remedy: long usage had made that which at first was optional, a point of good manners, and consequently of necessity, and I was forced to neglect the Task to attend upon the Muse who had inspired the subject. But she had ill health, and before I quite finished the work was obliged to repair to Bristol. Thus, as I told you, my dear, the cause of the many interruptions that I mentioned, was removed, and now, except the Bull that I spoke of, we have seldom any company at all. After all that I have said upon this matter, you will not completely understand me perhaps, unless I account for the remainder of the day. I will add therefore, that having paid my morning visit, I walked; returning from my walk, I dressed; we then met and dined, and parted not till between ten and eleven at night.

My cousin, I thank you for giving me a copy of the General's note, of which I and my publication were so much the subject. I learned from it better than I could have learned the same thing from any other document, the kindness of his purposes towards me, and how much I may depend on his assistance. I am vexed, and have been these three days, that I thwarted him in the affair of a specimen; but as I told you, I have still my gloomy hours, which had their share, together with the more powerful cause assigned above, in determining my behaviour. But I have given the best proof possible of my repentance, and was indeed in such haste to evince it, that I sent my despatches to Newport, on purpose to catch the bypost. How much I love you for the generosity of that offer which made the General observe that your money seemed to *burn* in your pocket, I cannot readily, nor indeed at all, express. Neither is Mrs. Unwin in the least behind me in her

sense of it. We may well admire and love you, for we have not met with many such occurrences, or even heard of many such, since we first entered a world where friendship is in every mouth, but finds only here and there a heart that has room for it.

I know well, my cousin, how formidable a creature you are when you become once outrageous. No sprat in a storm is half so terrible. But it is all in vain. You are at a distance, so we snap our fingers at you. Not that we have any more fowls at present. No, no; you may make yourself easy upon that subject. The coop is empty, and at this time of year cannot be replenished, but the spring will soon begin to advance. There are such things as eggs in the world, which eggs will, by incubation, be transformed, some of them into chickens, and others of them into ducklings. So muster up all your patience, for as sure as you live, if we live also, we shall put it to the trial. But seriously, you must not deny us one of the greatest pleasures we can have, which is, to give you now and then a little tiny proof how much we value you. We cannot sit with our hands before us, and be contented with only saying that we love Lady Hesketh.

The little item that you inserted in your cover, concerning a review of a certain author's work, in the Gentleman's Magazine, excited Mrs. Unwin's curiosity to see it in a moment. In vain did I expostulate with her on the vanity of all things here below, especially of human praise, telling her what perhaps indeed she had heard before, but what on such an occasion I thought it not amiss to remind her of, that at the best it is but as the idle wind that whistles as it passes by, and that a little attention to the dictates of reason would presently give her the victory over all the curiosity that she felt so troublesome. For a short time, indeed, I prevailed, but the next day the fit returned upon her with more violence than before. She would see it,—she was resolved that she would see it that moment. You must know, my dear, that a watchmaker lives within two or three doors of us, who takes in the said Magazine for a gentleman at some distance, and as it happened it had not been sent to its proper owner. Accordingly the messenger that the lady dispatched, returned with it, and she was gratified. As to myself, I read the article indeed, and read it to her; but I do not concern myself much you may suppose about such matters, and shall only make two or three cursory

remarks, and so conclude. In the first place therefore, I observe that it is enough to craze a poor poet to see his verses so miserably misprinted, and which is worse if possible, his very praises in a manner annihilated, by a jumble of the lines out of their places, so that in two instances, the end of the period takes the lead of the beginning of it. The said poet has still the more reason to be crazed, because the said Magazine is in general singularly correct. But at Christmas, no doubt your printer will get drunk as well as another man. It is astonishing to me that they know so exactly how much I translated of Voltaire. My recollection refreshed by them tells me that they are right in the number of the books that they affirm to have been translated by me, but till they brought the fact again to my mind, I myself had forgotten that part of the business entirely. My brother had twenty guineas for eight books of English Henriade, and I furnished him with four of them. They are not equally accurate in the affair of the Tame Mouse. That I kept one is certain, and that I kept it as they say, in my bureau,—but not in the Temple. It was while I was at Westminster. I kept it till it produced six young ones, and my transports when I first discovered them cannot easily be conceived,—any more than my mortification, when going again to visit my little family, I found that mouse herself had eaten them! I turned her loose, in indignation, and vowed never to keep a mouse again. Who the writer of this article can be I am not able to imagine, nor where he had his information of these particulars. But they know all the world and every thing that belongs to it. The mistake that has occasioned the mention of Unwin's name in the margin would be ludicrous if it were not, inadvertently indeed, and innocently on their part, profane. I should have thought it impossible that when I spoke of One who had been wounded in the hands and in the side, any reader in a Christian land could have been for a moment at a loss for the person intended.

Adieu, my dear cousin; I intended that one of these should have served as a case for the other, but before I was aware of it, I filled both sheets completely. However, as your money burns in your pocket, there is no harm done. I shall not add a syllable more except that I am and, while I breathe, ever shall be

Most truly yours, WM. COWPER.

Yes; one syllable more. Having just finished the Iliad, I was determined to have a deal of talk with you.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAR, Olney, Monday, Jan. 23, 1786.

ANONYMOUS is come again;—may God bless him, whosoever he be, as I doubt not that he will. A certain person said on a certain occasion, (and he never spoke a word that failed,) Whoso giveth you a cup of cold water in my name, shall by no means lose his reward. Therefore anonymous as he chooses to be upon earth, his name I trust, will hereafter be found written in heaven. But when great princes, or characters much superior to great princes, choose to be incog, it is a sin against decency and good manners to seem to know them. I therefore know nothing of anonymous, but that I love him heartily and with most abundant cause. Had I opportunity I would send you his letter, though yourself excepted, I would indulge none with a sight of it. To confide it to *your* hands will be no violation of the secrecy that he has enjoined himself, and consequently me. But I can give you a short summary of its purport.—After an introduction of a religious cast, which does great honour to himself, and in which he makes a humble comparison between himself and me, by far too much to my advantage, he proceeds to tell me that being lately in company where my last work was mentioned, mention was also made of my intended publication. He informs me of the different sentiments of the company on that subject, and expresses his own in terms the most encouraging; but adds, that having left the company, and shut himself up in his chamber, an apprehension there seized him, lest, if perhaps the world should not enter into my views of the matter, and the work should come short of the success that I hope for, the mortification might prove too much for my health; yet thinks that even in that case I may comfort myself by adverting to similar instances of failure where the writer's genius would have insured success, if any thing could have insured it, and alludes in particular to the fate and fortune of the Paradise Lost. In the last place he gives his attention to my circumstances, takes the kindest notice of their narrowness, and makes me a present of an annuity of fifty pounds a year, wishing that it were five hundred pounds. In a P. S. he tells

me, a small parcel will set off by the Wellingborough coach on Tuesday next, which he hopes will arrive safe. I have given you the bones, but the benignity and affection which is the marrow of those bones, in so short an abridgement, I could not give you. Wonder with me, my beloved cousin, at the goodness of God, who, according to Dr. Watts's beautiful stanza,

> —— can clear the darkest skies,
> Can give us day for night,
> Make drops of sacred sorrow rise
> To rivers of delight.

As I said once before, so say I again, my heart is as light as a bird on the subject of Homer. Neither without prayer, nor without confidence in the providential goodness of God, has that work been undertaken or continued. I am not so dim-sighted, sad as my spirit is at times, but that I can plainly discern his Providence going before me in the way. Unforeseen, unhoped-for advantages have sprung at his bidding, and a prospect, at first cloudy indeed and discouraging enough, has been continually brightening ever since I announced my intentions. But suppose the worst;—suppose that I should not succeed in any measure proportioned to my hopes;—how then? Why then, my dear, I will hold this language with myself: To write was necessary to me. I undertook an honourable task, and with upright intentions. It served me for more than two years as an amusement, and as such was of infinite service to my spirits. But God did not see it good for me that I should be very famous. If he did not, it is better for me that I am not. Fame is neither my meat nor my drink; I lived fifty years without it, and should I live fifty more and get to heaven at last, then I shall not want it.—So, my dear, you see that I am armed at all points. I do not mean that I should feel nothing, but that thus thinking I should feel supportably.

I knew that my last letter would give you pain, but there is no need that it should give you so much. He who hath preserved me hitherto, will still preserve me. All the dangers that I have escaped are so many pillars of remembrance to which I shall hereafter look back with comfort, and be able, as I well hope, to inscribe on every one of them a grateful memorial of God's singular protection of me. Mine has been

a life of wonders for many years, and a life of wonders I in my heart believe it will be to the end. Wonders I have seen in the great deeps, and wonders I shall see in the paths of mercy also. This, my dear, is my creed.

My eyes, you know were never strong, and it was in the character of a carpenter that I almost put them out. The strains and the exertions of hard labour distended and relaxed the blood vessels to such a degree that an inflammation ensued so painful that for a year I was in continual torment, and had so far lost the sight of one of them that I could distinguish with it nothing but the light, and very faintly *that*. But a medicine of Elliot's, which I had never tried before, though two of his medicines I had used for many years, through God's mercy cured me almost in an instant, and my eyes are for the most part stronger and clearer now than they were when you used to see me daily. I shall write to Sephus soon for a supply of this medicine, for though I do not often want it, I would never be without it. He has always procured it for me.

I am heartily glad that your thoughts and ours coincided so exactly on the subject of the Madans. I should be very sorry to see Signors and Signoras in the list of my subscribers; yet such a sight, as those warblers have so much the command of his purse, it is not at all impossible that I might encounter. He will necessarily hear of the work, and if he subscribes himself, it shall be quite sufficient. I rejoice at my success with Dr. Maty. He was probably that friend of Dr. Johnson's, who revised my first volume, and made a favourable report of it. But that the knowledge of this last has diffused itself so much further, has been owing, my dear, principally to yourself. If Dr. Maty applied to you for permission to mention my Homer in his next Review, it is plainly enough to be seen that from you he received, or by your means, my last publication. *Vous avez beaucoup de courage, ma cousine*, in my cause. Neither the asperity of a critic professed, nor the frowns of a whole university whom I have censured, have any terrors for you, where you apprehend my interest is concerned. If Dr. Jackson should not call me also a d——d fool, as well as Pope, I should not wonder if he were to give me as hard a name, or if my book were to be burnt at Carfax. But never mind, the book will do them no harm, if they do not quarrel with good

counsel; and if they should, their resentment will do me none.

I must not conclude without a word in answer to your affectionate enquiries concerning the success of Dr. Kerr's regimen. It has done all that in the course of so short a time I could expect from it. I have bid adieu to indigestions and heartburn. A spasmodic affection of the stomach in the night I am still troubled with, but in a less degree. In short, I have little doubt that perseverance in the course he has prescribed shall, by the blessing of God, restore me entirely. I have added to my dumb-bells a rope, through which I jump, if I do not flatter myself, with as much agility as when a boy. This is much the best domestic exercise of the two.

I have a large interest in Staffordshire by means of the Bagot family; and yesterday brought me another letter from Walter Bagot, entreating me to hasten my specimen through the press, for that the nobs and the gents were all upon the point of flying to London. Lord Dartmouth is equally anxious on the same subject. Richard Howard, formerly Richard Bagot, has subscribed another twenty pounds, and his brother Walter desires me to present him with my two volumes handsomely bound, to secure him the more in my interest.

My ever beloved cousin, adieu.—Perfectly yours.

W. C.

Oysters attend us duly. Thanks.

Thank you, my dear, for galloping John. He rides well.

P. S.—I kept my letter unsealed to the last moment, that I might give you an account of the safe arrival of the expected parcel. It is at all points worthy of the letter-writer. Snuff-box, purse, notes, Bess, Puss, Tiney, all safe. Again, may God bless him!

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

MY DEAR AND FAITHFUL FRIEND, Jan. 23, 1786.

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The paragraph that I am now beginning will contain information of a kind that I am not very fond of communicating, and on a subject that I am not very fond of writing about. Only to you I will open my budget without reserve, because I know that in what concerns my authorship you take an interest

that demands my confidence, and will be pleased with every occurrence that is at all propitious to my endeavours. Lady Hesketh, who, had she as many mouths as Virgil's Fame, with a tongue in each, would employ them all in my service, writes me word that Dr. Maty of the Museum has read my Task. I cannot even to you relate what he says of it; though, when I began this story, I thought I had courage enough to tell it boldly. He designs however to give his opinion of it in his next monthly Review; and being informed that I was about to finish a translation of Homer, asked her Ladyship's leave to mention the circumstance on that occasion. This incident pleases me the more, because I have authentic intelligence of his being a critical character in all its forms, acute, sour, and blunt; and so incorruptible withal, and so unsusceptible of bias from undue motives, that, as my correspondent informs me, he would not praise his own mother, did he not think she deserved it.

The said Task is likewise gone to Oxford, conveyed thither by an intimate friend of Dr. Jackson's, with a purpose of putting it into his hands. My friend, what will they do with me at Oxford? Will they burn me at Carfax, or will they anathematize me with bell, book, and candle? I can say with more truth than Ovid did,—*Parve nec invideo.*

The said Dr. Jackson has been heard to say, and I give you his own words, (stop both your ears while I utter them,) "that Homer has never been translated, and that Pope was a fool." Very irreverent language to be sure; but in consideration of the subject on which he used them, we will pardon it, even in a dean. One of the masters of Eton told a friend of mine lately, that a translation of Homer is much wanted. So now you have all my news. * * * *

Yours, my dear friend, cordially, W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, Jan. 31, 1786.

It is very pleasant, my dearest cousin, to receive a present so delicately conveyed as that which I received so lately from Anonymous; but it is also very painful to have nobody to thank for it. I find myself, therefore, driven by stress of necessity to the following resolution, viz. that I will constitute you my Thank-receiver-general for whatsoever gift I shall re-

ceive hereafter, as well as for those that I have already received from a nameless benefactor. I therefore thank you, my cousin, for a most elegant present, including the most elegant compliment that ever poet was honoured with; for a snuff-box of tortoise-shell, with a beautiful landscape on the lid of it, glazed with crystal, having the figures of three hares in the foreground, and inscribed above with these words, *The Peasant's Nest;* and below with these, *Tiney, Puss, and Bess.* For all and every of these I thank you, and also for standing proxy on this occasion. Nor must I forget to thank you, that so soon after I had sent you the first letter of Anonymous, I received another in the same hand.—There! Now I am a little easier.

I have almost conceived a design to send up half a dozen stout country fellows to tie by the leg to their respective bedposts the company that so abridges your opportunity of writing to me. Your letters are the joy of my heart, and I cannot endure to be robbed, by I know not whom, of half my treasure. But there is no comfort without a drawback, and therefore it is that I, who have unknown friends, have unknown enemies also. Ever since I wrote last I find myself in better health, and my nocturnal spasms and fever considerably abated. I intend to write to Dr. Kerr on Thursday, that I may gratify him with an account of my amendment; for to him I know that it will be a gratification. Were he not a physician, I should regret that he lives so distant, for he is a most agreeable man; but being what he is, it would be impossible to have his company, even if he were a neighbour, unless in time of sickness; at which time, whatever charms he might have himself, my own must necessarily lose much of their effect on him.

When I write to you, my dear, what I have already related to the General, I am always fearful lest I should tell you that for news with which you are well acquainted. For once, however, I will venture. On Wednesday last I received from Johnson the MS. copy of a specimen that I had sent to the General; and, enclosed in the same cover, notes upon it by an unknown critic. Johnson, in a short letter, recommended him to me as a man of unquestionable learning and ability. On perusal and consideration of his remarks, I found him *such;* and having nothing so much at heart as to give all pos-

ible security to yourself and the General, that my work shall not come forth unfinished, I answered Johnson, that I would gladly submit my MS. to his friend. He is, in truth, a very clever fellow, perfectly a stranger to me, and one who I promise you will not spare for severity of animadversion, where he shall find occasion. It is impossible for you, my dearest cousin, to express a wish that I do not equally feel a wish to gratify. You are desirous that Maty should see a book of my Homer, and for that reason if Maty *will* see a book of it, he shall be welcome, although time is likely to be precious, and consequently any delay, that is not absolutely necessary, as much as possible to be avoided. I am now revising the Iliad. It is a business that will cost me four months, perhaps five; for I compare the very words as I go, and if much alteration should occur, must transcribe the whole. The first book I have almost transcribed already. To these five months Johnson says that nine more must be added for printing; and upon my own experience, I will venture to assure you, that the tardiness of printers will make those nine months twelve. There is danger therefore that my subscribers may think that I make them wait too long, and that they who know me not may suspect a bubble. How glad shall I be to read it over in an evening, book by book, as fast as I settle the copy, to you and to Mrs. Unwin! She has been my touchstone always, and without reference to her taste and judgement I have printed nothing. With one of you at each elbow I should think myself the happiest of all poets.

The General and I, having broken the ice, are upon the most comfortable terms of correspondence. He writes very affectionately to me, and I say every thing to him that comes uppermost. I could not write frequently to any creature living upon any other terms than those. He tells me of infirmities that he has, which make him less active than he was. I am sorry to hear that he has any such. Alas! alas! he was young when I saw him, only twenty years ago.

I have the most affectionate letter imaginable from Colman, who writes to me like a brother. The Chancellor is yet dumb.

May God have you in his keeping, my beloved cousin.

Farewell. W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, Olney, Feb. 9, 1786.

I HAVE been impatient to tell you that I am impatient to see you again. Mrs. Unwin partakes with me in all my feelings upon this subject, and longs also to see you. I should have told you so by the last post, but have been so completely occupied by this tormenting specimen, that it was impossible to do it. I sent the General a letter on Monday, that would distress and alarm him; I sent him another yesterday, that will, I hope, quiet him again. Johnson has apologized very civilly for the multitude of his friend's strictures; and his friend has promised to confine himself in future to a comparison of me with the original, so that, I doubt not, we shall jog on merrily together. And now, my dear, let me tell you once more, that your kindness in promising us a visit has charmed us both. I shall see you again. I shall hear your voice. We shall take walks together. I will show you my prospects, the hovel, the alcove, the Ouse, and its banks, every thing that I have described. I anticipate the pleasure of those days not very far distant, and feel a part of it at this moment. Talk not of an inn! Mention it not for your life! We have never had so many visitors, but we could easily accommodate them all; though we have received Unwin, and his wife, and his sister, and his son all at once. My dear, I will not let you come till the end of May, or beginning of June, because before that time my greenhouse will not be ready to receive us, and it is the only pleasant room belonging to us. When the plants go out, we go in. I line it with mats, and spread the floor with mats; and there you shall sit with a bed of mignionette at your side, and a hedge of honeysuckles, roses, and jasmine; and I will make you a bouquet of myrtle every day. Sooner than the time I mention the country will not be in complete beauty. And I will tell you what you shall find at your first entrance. Imprimis, as soon as you have entered the vestibule, if you cast a look on either side of you, you shall see on the right hand a box of my making. It is the box in which have been lodged all my hares, and in which lodges Puss at present: but he, poor fellow, is worn out with age, and promises to die before you can see him. On the right hand stands a cupboard, the work of the same author; it was once a dovecage, but I transformed it. Opposite to you stands a table,

which I also made: but a merciless servant having scrubbed it until it became paralytic, it serves no purpose now but of ornament; and all my clean shoes stand under it. On the left hand, at the further end of this superb vestibule, you will find the door of the parlour, into which I will conduct you, and where I will introduce you to Mrs. Unwin, unless we should meet her before, and where we will be as happy as the day is long. Order yourself, my cousin, to the Swan at Newport, and there you shall find me ready to conduct you to Olney.

My dear, I have told Homer what you say about casks and urns, and have asked him, whether he is sure that it is a cask in which Jupiter keeps his wine. He swears that it is a cask, and that it will never be any thing better than a cask to eternity. So if the god is content with it, we must even wonder at his taste, and be so too.

Adieu! my dearest, dearest cousin. W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, Olney, Feb. 11, 1786.

It must be, I suppose, a fortnight or thereabout since I wrote last, I feel myself so alert and so ready to write again. Be that as it may, here I come. We talk of nobody but you. What we will do with you when we get you, where you shall walk, where you shall sleep; in short, every thing that bears the remotest relation to your well-being at Olney, occupies all our talking time,—which is all that I do not spend at Troy.

I have every reason for writing to you as often as I can, but I have a particular reason for doing it now. I want to tell you that by the Diligence on Wednesday next, I mean to send you a quire of my Homer for Maty's perusal. It will contain the first book, and as much of the second as brings us to the catalogue of the ships, and is every morsel of the revised copy that I have transcribed. My dearest cousin, read it yourself, let the General read it; do what you please with it, so that it reach Johnson in due time. But let Maty be the only *critic* that has any thing to do with it. The vexation, the perplexity, that attends a multiplicity of criticisms by various hands, many of which are sure to be futile, many of them ill founded, and some of them contradictory to others, is inconceivable, except by the author, whose ill fated work happens to be the subject of them. This also appears to me self-evident, that if a work

have passed under the review of one man of taste and learning, and have the good fortune to please him, his approbation gives security for that of all others qualified like himself. I speak thus, my dear, after having just escaped from such a storm of trouble, occasioned by endless remarks, hints, suggestions, and objections, as drove me almost to despair, and to the very verge of a resolution to drop my undertaking for ever. With infinite difficulty I at last sifted the chaff from the wheat, availed myself of what appeared to me to be just, and rejected the rest, but not till the labour and anxiety had nearly undone all that Kerr had been doing for me. My beloved cousin, trust me for it, as you safely may, that temper, vanity, and self-importance, had nothing to do in all this distress that I suffered. It was merely the effect of an alarm, that I could not help taking, when I compared the great trouble I had with a few lines only, thus handled, with that which I foresaw such handling of the whole must necessarily give me. I felt beforehand that my constitution would not bear it. I shall send up this second specimen in a box that I have had made on purposè; and when Maty has done with the copy, and you have done with it yourself, then you must return it in said box to my translatorship. Though Johnson's friend has teased me sadly, I verily believe that I shall have no more such cause to complain of him. We now understand one another, and I firmly believe that I might have gone the world through, before I had found his equal in an accurate and familiar acquaintance with the original.

A letter to Mr. Urban in the last Gentleman's Magazine, of which I's book is the subject, pleases me more than any thing I have seen in the way of eulogium yet. I have no guess of the author.

I do not wish to remind the Chancellor of his promise. Ask you why, my cousin? Because I suppose it would be impossible. He has, no doubt, forgotten it entirely, and would be obliged to take my word for the truth of it, which I could not bear. We drank tea together with Mrs. C———e, and her sister, in King Street, Bloomsbury, and there was the promise made. I said—"Thurlow, I am nobody, and shall be always nobody, and you will be Chancellor. You shall provide for me when you are." He smiled, and replied, "I surely will." —"*These* ladies," said I, "are witnesses." He still smiled,

and said—"Let them be so, for I will certainly do it." But alas! twenty-four years have passed since the day of the date thereof; and to mention it now would be to upbraid him with inattention to his plighted troth. Neither do I suppose he could easily serve such a creature as I am, if he would.

Adieu, whom I love entirely, W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Feb. 18, 1786.

I FEEL myself truly obliged to you for the leave that you give me, to be less frequent in writing, and more brief than heretofore. I have a long work upon my hands; and standing engaged to the public, (for by this time I suppose my subscription papers to be gone abroad,) not only for the performance of it, but for the performance of it in a reasonable time, it seems necessary to me not to intermit it often. My correspondence has also lately been renewed with several of my relations, and unavoidably engrosses now and then one of the few opportunities that I can find for writing. I nevertheless intend, in the exchange of letters with you, to be as regular as I can be, and to use, like a friend, the friendly allowance that you have made me.

My reason for giving notice of an Odyssey as well as an Iliad, was this:—I feared that the public, being left to doubt whether I should ever translate the former, would be unwilling to treat with me for the latter; which they will be apt to consider as an odd volume, and unworthy to stand upon their shelves alone. It is hardly probable, however, that I should begin the Odyssey for some months to come, being now closely engaged in the revisal of my translation of the Iliad, which I compare, as I go, most minutely with the original. One of the great defects of Pope's translation is, that it is licentious. To publish, therefore, a translation now that should be at all chargeable with the same fault,—that were not indeed as close and as faithful as possible, would be only *actum agere*, and had therefore better be left undone. Whatever be said of mine, when it shall appear, it shall never be said that it is not faithful.

I thank you heartily, both for your wishes and prayers, that should a disappointment occur, I may not be too much hurt by it. Strange as it may seem to say it, and unwilling as I

should be to say it to any person less candid than yourself, I will nevertheless say, that I have not entered on this work, unconnected as it must needs appear with the interests of the cause of God, without the direction of his Providence, nor altogether unassisted by him in the performance of it. Time will show to what it ultimately tends. I am inclined to believe that it has a tendency to which I myself am, at present, perfectly a stranger. Be that as it may, He knows my frame, and will consider that I am but dust; dust, into the bargain, that has been so trampled under foot and beaten, that a storm less violent than an unsuccessful issue of such a business might occasion, would be sufficient to blow me quite away. But I will tell you honestly, I have no fears upon the subject. My predecessor has given me every advantage.

As I know not to what end this my present occupation may finally lead, so neither did I know, when I wrote it, or at all suspect, one valuable end, at least, that was to be answered by the Task. It has pleased God to prosper it; and being composed in blank verse, it is likely to prove as seasonable an introduction to a blank verse Homer, by the same hand, as any that could have been devised: yet when I wrote the last line of the Task, I as little suspected that I should ever engage in a version of the old Asiatic tale, as you do now. Let me now boast of some favours that the Task has procured me from benefactors at present unknown, and likely to continue so. In the first place I am indebted to it, at least I have every reason to think so, for a most elegant writing-desk: it is of cedar, and mounted with silver. Lady Hesketh sent it, but assured me that she is not the giver, neither will he be known. In the next place it has been the occasion unequivocally, of my receiving from another anonymous donor a handsome snuff-box, embellished on the lid with a landscape overlaid with a crystal. The background of the drawing, which is extremely neat, consists of a hill with a cottage on its top surrounded by trees, and in the foreground are seen the figures of three hares. Above, it is inscribed with these words—*The peasant's nest;* and below with these—*Puss, Tiney, and Bess.* My benefactor learned those names from an history of these three captives that I published two years since in the Gentleman's Magazine, and has characterised them exactly according to that account of them.

I should choose for your general motto,

Carmina tum melius, cùm venerit ipse, canemus.

For vol. i.

Unum pro multis dabitur caput.

For vol. ii.

Aspice, venturo lætentur ut omnia sæclo.

It seems to me that you cannot have better than these.

Our best love to Mrs. Newton, with thanks for Russia tongues. Yours, my dear friend, WM. COWPER.

P.S. We wish S. Johnson very happy, and think that if a good Christian husband and a rural retreat can make her so, she has every thing on her side.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, Olney, Feb. 19, 1786.

SINCE so it must be, so it shall be. If you will not sleep under the roof of a friend, may you never sleep under the roof of an enemy! An enemy, however, you will not presently find. Mrs. Unwin bids me mention her affectionately, and tell you that she willingly gives up a part, for the sake of the rest, willingly, at least, as far as willingly may consist with some reluctance. I feel my reluctance too. Our design was, that you should have slept in the room that serves me for a study, and its having been occupied by you would have been an additional recommendation of it to me. But all reluctances are superseded by the thought of seeing you; and because we have nothing so much at heart as the wish to see you happy and comfortable, we are desirous therefore to accommodate you to your own mind, and not to ours. Mrs. Unwin has already secured for you an apartment, or rather two, just such as we could wish. The house in which you will find them is within thirty yards of our own, and opposite to it. The whole affair is thus commodiously adjusted; and now I have nothing to do but to wish for June; and June, my cousin, was never so wished for since June was made. I shall have a thousand things to hear, and a thousand to say, and they will all rush into my mind together, till it will be so crowded with things impatient to be said, that for some time I shall say nothing. But no matter,—sooner or later they will all come out; and

since we shall have you the longer for not having you under our own roof, (a circumstance, that, more than any thing, reconciles us to that measure,) they will stand the better chance. After so long a separation, a separation that of late seemed likely to last for life, we shall meet each other as alive from the dead; and for my own part I can truly say, that I have not a friend in the other world whose resurrection would give me greater pleasure.

I am truly happy, my dear, in having pleased you with what you have seen of my Homer. I wish that all English readers had your unsophisticated, or rather unadulterated taste, and could relish simplicity like you. But I am well aware that in this respect I am under a disadvantage, and that many, especially many ladies, missing many turns and prettinesses of expression that they have admired in Pope, will account my translation in those particulars defective. But I comfort myself with the thought that in reality it is no defect; on the contrary, that the want of all such embellishments as do not belong to the original will be one of its principal merits with persons indeed capable of relishing Homer. He is the best poet that ever lived for many reasons, but for none more than for that majestic plainness that distinguishes him from all others. As an accomplished person moves gracefully without thinking of it, in like manner the dignity of Homer seems to cost him no labour. It was natural to him to say great things, and to say them well, and little ornaments were beneath his notice. If Maty, my dearest cousin, should return to you my copy with any such strictures as may make it necessary for me to see it again, before it goes to Johnson, in that case you shall send it to me, otherwise to Johnson immediately; for he writes me word he wishes his friend to go to work upon it as soon as possible. When you come, my dear, we will hang all these critics together, for they have worried me without remorse or conscience: at least one of them has. I had actually murdered more than a few of the best lines in the specimen, in compliance with his requisitions, but plucked up my courage at last, and in the very last opportunity that I had, recovered them to life again by restoring the original reading. At the same time I readily confess that the specimen is the better for all this discipline its author has undergone; but then it has been more indebted for its improvement to that pointed accu-

racy of examination, to which I was myself excited, than to any proposed amendments from Mr. Critic; for as sure as you are my cousin whom I long to see at Olney, so surely would he have done me irreparable mischief, if I would have given him leave.

My friend Bagot writes to me in a most friendly strain, and calls loudly upon me for original poetry. When I shall have done with Homer, probably he will not call in vain. Having found the prime feather of a swan on the banks of the *smug and silver Trent*, he keeps it for me.

Adieu, my dear cousin, W. C.

I am sorry that the General has such indifferent health. He must not die. I can by no means spare a person so kind to me.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Olney, Feb. 27, 1786.

ALAS! alas! my dear, dear friend, may God himself comfort you! I will not be so absurd as to attempt it. By the close of your letter it should seem, that in this hour of great trial he withholds not his consolations from you. I know by experience that they are neither few nor small; and though I feel for you as I never felt for man before, yet do I sincerely rejoice in this, that whereas there is but one true comforter in the universe, under afflictions such as yours, you both know him, and know where to seek him. I thought you a man the most happily mated that I had ever seen, and had great pleasure in your felicity. Pardon me, if now I feel a wish that, short as my acquaintance with her was, I had never seen her. I should have mourned with you, but not as I do now. Mrs. Unwin sympathizes with you also most sincerely, and you neither are, nor will be soon forgotten in such prayers as we can make at Olney. I will not detain you longer now, my poor afflicted friend, than to commit you to the tender mercy of God, and to bid you a sorrowful adieu!

Adieu! ever yours, W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, Mond. Feb. 27, 1786.

As I sat by the fireside this day after dinner, I saw your chamber windows coated over with snow, so that the glass was

hardly visible. This circumstance naturally suggested the thought that it will be otherwise when you come. Then the roses will begin to blow, and perhaps the heat will be as troublesome as the cold is now. The next thought of course was this,—three long months must pass before we shall see her! I will, however, be as patient as I can, and comfort myself with the thought that we shall meet at last. You said in one of your letters that you had resolved to dream of nobody but of Homer and his translator. I hope you keep your resolution, for I can assure you that the last-mentioned dreams most comfortably of you. About three nights since I dreamed that, sitting in our summer-house, I saw you coming towards me. *With inexpressible pleasure I sprang to meet you, caught you in my arms, and said,—Oh my precious, precious cousin, may God make me thankful that I see thy face again!* Now, this was a dream, and no dream;—it was only a shadow while it lasted; but if we both live, and live to meet, it will be realized hereafter. Yet alas! the passages and events of the day as well as of the night are little better than dreams. Poor Bagot! whom I love sincerely because he has a singular affection for me. Ten days since he wrote me a letter, by which it appeared he was cheerful and happy. Yesterday brought me another, consisting of only about six lines, in which he tells me that his wife is dead. I transcribe it, for it is impossible to do it justice any other way.

"Oh, my dear friend—Things are much altered with me since I wrote last. My harp is turned into mourning, and my music into the voice of weeping. Her whom you saw and loved,—her whom nobody ever yet saw and knew that did not love; her have I lost. Pray to God for me, that for Christ's sake he would continue to comfort and support both me and mine under our great affliction.

Yours ever,

"Blithfield, Feb. 23, 1796. WALT. BAGOT."

Poor man! I can attest the truth of what he says from my own knowledge of her, however short. There are people whose characters we penetrate and fully comprehend in a moment: she was one of those. Her character was so strongly marked in the gentleness of her aspect, her voice, her carriage, that the instant she was seen she was beloved. My knowledge

of her was two hours long, and no more; yet when I took leave of her, I could not help saying, God bless you, madam! Indeed, my cousin, I never felt so much for any man. His own sensibilities are naturally of the quickest, and he was attached to her in the extreme, as it was impossible but that he must be. Mr. Madan's book happened to be mentioned when he was here, when all he said of it was—"I know not how Mr. Madan finds it, but the longer I know my wife, the more I love her." At that time I had never seen her, but when I did I wondered not.

I hardly know how to leave this subject for another, but it is necessary that I should. So farewell, poor Bagot, for the present; may God comfort thee and thy seven children!—Now for Homer, and the matters to Homer appertaining. Sephus and I are of opinions perfectly different on the subject of such an advertisement as he recommends. The only proper part for me is not to know that such a man as Pope has ever existed. I am so nice upon this subject that in that note in the specimen, in which I have accounted for the anger of Achilles, (which, I believe, I may pay myself the compliment to say was never accounted for before,) I have not even so much as hinted at the perplexity in which Pope was entangled when he endeavoured to explain it, nor at the preposterous and blundering work that he has made with it. No, my dear, as I told you once before, my attempt has itself a loud voice, and speaks a most intelligible language. Had Pope's translation been good, or had I thought it such, or had I not known that it is admitted by all whom a knowledge of the original qualifies to judge of it, to be a very defective one, I had never translated myself one line of Homer. Dr. Johnson is the only modern writer who has spoken of it in terms of approbation, at least the only one that I have met with. And his praise of it is such as convinces me, intimately acquainted as I am with Pope's performance, that he talked at random, that either he had never examined it by Homer's, or never since he was a boy. For I would undertake to produce numberless passages from it, if need were, not only ill translated, but meanly written. It is not therefore for me, convinced as I am of the truth of all I say, to go forth into the world holding up Pope's translation with one hand as a work to be extolled, and my own with the other as a work still wanted. It is plain to me that I behave

with sufficient liberality on the occasion if, neither praising nor blaming my predecessor, I go right forward, and leave the world to decide between us.

Now, to come nearer to myself. Poets, my dear, (it is a secret I have lately discovered,) are born to trouble, and of all poets, translators of Homer to the most. Our dear friend, the General, whom I truly love, in his last letter mortified me not a little. I do not mean by suggesting lines that he thought might be amended, for I hardly ever wrote fifty lines together that I could not afterwards have improved, but by what appeared to me an implied censure on the whole, or nearly the whole quire that I sent to you. It was a great work, he said; it should be kept long in hand;—years, if it were possible; that it stood in need of much amendment, that it ought to be made worthy of me, that he could not think of showing it to Maty, that he could not even think of laying it before Johnson and his friend in its present condition. Now, my dear, understand thou this: if there lives a man who stands clear of the charge of careless writing, I am that man. I might prudently, perhaps, but I could not honestly, admit that charge. It would account in a way favourable to my own ability for many defects of which I am guilty, but it would be disingenuous and untrue. The copy which I sent to you was almost a new, I mean a second, translation, as far as it went. With the first I had taken pains, but with the second I took more. I weighed many expressions, exacted from myself the utmost fidelity to my author, and tried all the numbers upon my own ear again and again. If, therefore, after all this care, the execution be such as in the General's account it seems to be, I appear to have made shipwreck of my hopes at once. He said, indeed, that the similes delighted him, and the catalogue of the ships surpassed his expectations: but his commendation of so small a portion of the whole affected me rather painfully, as it seemed to amount to an implied condemnation of the rest. I have been the more uneasy because I know his taste to be good, and by the selection that he made of lines that he thought should be altered, he proved it such. I altered them all, and thanked him, as I could very sincerely, for his friendly attention. Now what is the present state of my mind on this subject? It is this. I do not myself think ill of what I have done, nor at the same time so foolishly well as to suppose that

it has no blemishes. But I am sadly afraid that the General's anxiety will make him extremely difficult to be pleased: I fear that he will require of me more than any other man would require, or than he himself would require of any other writer. What I can do to give him satisfaction, I am perfectly ready to do; but it is possible for an anxious friend to demand more than my ability could perform. Not a syllable of all this, my dear, to him or to any creature.—Mum!

Your question, your natural, well warranted, and most reasonable question concerning me and Mrs. Unwin, shall be answered at large when we meet. But to Mrs. Unwin I refer you for that answer; she is most desirous to give you a most explicit one. I have a history, my dear, belonging to me, which I am not the proper person to relate. You have heard somewhat of it,—as much as it was possible for me to write; but that *somewhat* bears a most inconsiderable proportion to the whole.

All intercourse has ceased between us and Lady Austen almost these two years. This mystery shall also be accounted for when you come. She has left Bristol, and is at present settled within a mile of us with her sister. You are candid, and will give me credit when I say that the fault is not with us.

I have disposed of thirty-three papers of Proposals,—even I. Mr. Throckmorton has most obligingly given me his name, and has undertaken the disposal of twelve. Lord Archibald Hamilton has also subscribed, at the instance of a neighbour of mine, and does me the honour to say that he subscribes with pleasure. Adieu, my beloved cousin; thank you for all your welcome intelligence. I had need of it.

Yours, most truly, WM. COWPER.

TO MR. JOHNSON.

SIR, Olney, March 5, 1786.

I OUGHT sooner to have acknowledged the receipt of Mr. Fuseli's strictures, and had I been at leisure to consult my own gratification, should have done so. The work will be greatly indebted to him, and I cannot help adding, although I believe I said so before, that I consider myself singularly happy in the advantages I shall derive to my translation from his fine taste, and accurate acquaintance with the original.

I wish much for an answer to my question concerning my

subscribers' payment at Bristol. Have you a correspondent there, who can negotiate it? Again I remind you, though perhaps unnecessarily, of the two volumes for Richard Howard, Esq.

I have this day sent to Lady Hesketh the remaining half of book 2, and the whole of books 3, 4, and 5. From her they will pass to General Cowper, and from him, I suppose, to Mr. Fuseli in a short time. In the interview he had with that gentleman, he was highly pleased with him.

I am Sir, your obedient servant, WM. COWPER.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, Olney, March 6, 1786.

YOUR opinion has more weight with me than that of all the critics in the world; and to give you a proof of it, I make you a concession that I would hardly have made to them all united. I do not indeed absolutely covenant, promise, and agree, that I will discard *all* my elisions, but I hereby bind myself to dismiss as *many* of them as, without sacrificing energy to sound, I can. It is incumbent upon me in the mean time to say something in justification of the few that I shall retain, that I may not seem a poet mounted rather on a mule than on Pegasus. In the first place, *The* is a barbarism. We are indebted for it to the Celts, or the Goths, or to the Saxons, and perhaps to them all. In the two best languages that ever were spoken, the Greek and the Latin, there is no similar incumbrance of expression to be found. Secondly, the perpetual use of it in our language is to us miserable poets attended with two great inconveniences. Our verse, consisting only of ten syllables, it not unfrequently happens that a fifth part of a line is to be engrossed, and necessarily too, (unless elision prevents it,) by this abominable intruder and, which is worse in my account, open vowels are continually the consequence—*The* element—*The* air, &c. Thirdly, the French, who are equally with the English chargeable with barbarism in this particular, dispose of their *Le* and their *La* without ceremony, and always take care that they shall be absorbed, both in verse and in prose, in the vowel that immediately follows them. Fourthly, and I believe lastly, (and for your sake I wish it may prove so), the practice of cutting short a *The* is warranted by Milton, who of all English poets that *ever lived*, had certainly the finest ear. Dr. Warton, indeed, has *dared to* say that he had a bad one; for which he deserves, we

far as critical demerit can deserve it, to lose his own. I thought I had done, but still there is a fifthly behind, and it is this,—that the custom of abbreviating *The* belongs to the style in which, in my advertisement annexed to the specimen, I profess to write. The use of that style would have warranted me in the practice of much greater liberty of this sort than I ever intended to take. In perfect consistence with that style I might say I' th' tempest, I' th' door-way, &c., which, however, I would not allow myself to do, because I was aware that it would be objected to, and with reason. But it seems to me for the causes above said, that when I shorten *The*, before a vowel, or before *wh*, as in the line you mention,

"Than th' whole broad Hellespont in all his parts,"

my licence is not equally exceptionable, because *W*, though he rank as a consonant in the word *whole*, is not allowed to announce himself to the ear; and *H* is an aspirate. But as I said at the beginning, so say I still,—I am most willing to conform myself to your very sensible observation, that it is necessary, if we would please, to consult the taste of our own day; neither would I have pelted you, my dearest cousin, with any part of this volley of good reasons, had I not designed them as an answer to those objections which you say you have heard from others. But I only mention them. Though satisfactory to myself, I waive them, and will allow to *The* his whole dimensions, whensoever it can be done.

Thou only critic of my verse that is to be found in all the earth, whom I love, what shall I say in answer to your own objection to that passage,—

"Softly he placed his hand
On th' old man's hand, and push'd it gently away."

I can say neither more nor less than this, that when our dear friend, the General, sent me his opinion of the specimen, quoting those very words from it, he added, "With this part I was particularly pleased; there is nothing in poetry more descriptive." Such were his very words. Taste, my dear, is various, there is nothing so various, and even between persons of the best taste there are diversities of opinion on the same subject, for which it is not possible to account. So much for these matters.

You advise me to consult the General, and to confide in him. I follow your advice, and have done both. By the last post I

asked his permission to send him the books of my Homer as fast as I should finish them off. I shall be glad of his remarks, and more glad than of any thing to do that which I hope may be agreeable to him. They will of course pass into your hands before they are sent to Johnson. The quire that I sent is now in the hands of Johnson's friend. I intended to have told you in my last, but forgot it, that Johnson behaves very handsomely in the affair of my two volumes. He acts with a liberality not often found in persons of his occupation, and to mention it, when occasion calls me to it, is a justice due to him.

I am very much pleased with Mr. Stanley's letter. Several compliments were paid me, on the subject of that first volume, by my own friends; but I do not recollect that I ever knew the opinion of a stranger about it before, whether favourable or otherwise. I only heard by a side wind, that it was very much read in Scotland, and more than here.

Farewell, my dearest cousin, whom we expect, of whom we talk continually, and whom we continually long for. W. C.

Your anxious wishes for my success delight me, and you may rest assured, my dear, that I have all the ambition on the subject that you can wish me to feel. I more than admire my author. I often stand astonished at his beauties. I am for ever amused with the translation of him, and I have received a thousand encouragements. These are all so many happy omens, that I hope shall be verified by the event.

TO MR. JOHNSON.

SIR, Olney, March 8, 1786.

You are very happy in being so intimately acquainted with Mr. Fuseli, a gentleman of such exquisite taste, and I also account myself very happy that by your means my work has found its way into the hands of a person, in all respects so perfectly well qualified to revise it. I am only sorry that my distance from town permits me not (at least at present) the pleasure of an introduction to one to whom I am to be so much indebted. I very sincerely thank you for interesting yourself so much in my comfort, as to write to me principally with a view to inform me of his approbation. You may take my word for it that I find your intelligence on that head a great and effectual encouragement. I have had some anxious thoughts upon the matter, as you may suppose; and they are guests that I am always glad

to dismiss when I can; and immediately after reading your letter, accordingly dismissed them.

Mr. Fuseli will assuredly find room for animadversion. There are some objectionable lines, and others that are improveable, of which I am myself aware. When I receive the MS. again I shall give it a close examination, both that I may avail myself of Mr. Fuseli's remarks to the utmost, and give to the whole of it the best finishing that I can.

I learn with pleasure from my friends in town, that the subscription prospers, and is likely to be brilliant and numerous. It is very little that in my situation I can contribute to it myself. I have, however, disposed of most of my papers, and some time about Easter, a friend of mine will attend you with two or three names and payments that have been picked up in this part of the world. The name of that friend is Bull. He is a humourist—and in some respects an oddity, but at the same time a man of excellent qualities and of much learning. Him I can see but seldom for he lives at the distance of five miles from Olney, and he is the only neighbour of mine with whom I can converse at all.

I have a relation at Bristol who subscribes for three sets, common paper. She wishes me to ask you whether you have not some correspondent at that place through whose hands the money may be remitted to you. If you can direct me how to advise her in this respect, when I write to her next,—which will be soon, I will send her the necessary information.

I am Sir, your most humble Servant, WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND, March 13, 1786.

I SEEM to be about to write to you, but I foresee that it will not be a letter, but a scrap that I shall send you. I could tell you things that, knowing how much you interest yourself in my success, I am sure would please you; but every moment of my leisure is necessarily spent at Troy. I am revising my translation, and bestowing on it more labour than at first. At the repeated and earnest solicitation of General Cowper, who had doubtless irrefragable reason on his side, I have put my book into the hands of the most extraordinary critic that I have ever heard of. He is a Swiss, a painter in the historical way;

has an accurate knowledge of English, and for his knowledge of Homer has, I verily believe, no fellow. Johnson recommended him to me. I am to send him the quires as fast I finish them off, and the first is now in his hands. I have the comfort to be able to tell you, that he is very much pleased with what he has seen. Johnson wrote to me lately on purpose to tell me so. Things having taken this turn, I fear that I must beg a release from my engagement to put the MS. into your hands. I am bound to print as soon as three hundred shall have subscribed, and consequently have not an hour to spare.

People generally love to go where they are admired, yet Lady Hesketh complains of not having seen you.

Yours, W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Monday, March 20, 1786.

THOSE mornings that I set apart for writing to you, my dearest cousin, are my holiday mornings. At those times I give myself a dispensation from all poetical employments, and as soon as I cease to converse with you, betake myself to a walk in the garden. You will observe therefore that my health cannot possibly suffer much by such a procedure, but is rather likely to be benefited; for finding it easy as well as pleasant to write when I write to you, I consequently spend less time at my desk than when Homer lies before me, and have more opportunity of taking exercise and air. Though you *seem* to be so, you are not *in fact* before-hand with me in what you say of my letters, for it has long been an agreed point between me and Mrs. Unwin that yours are the best in the world. You will say—"that is impossible, for I always write what comes uppermost, and never trouble myself either about method or expression." And for that very reason, my dear, they are what they are, so good that they could not be better. As to expression, you have no need to study it; yours is sure to be such as it ought; and as to method, you know as well as I, that it is never more out of its place than in a letter. I have only to add on this subject, that not a word of all this is designed as a compliment to you, but merely as a justification of our opinion.

I begin heartily to wish that Signor Fuseli had accomplished

his critique of what now lies before him. You have twice been disagreeably constrained to apologize to Mr. Burrows for the delay, and I am very unwilling that you should be a third time reduced to that necessity. I shall be obliged when it comes to my hands again to bestow on it perhaps two or three sittings, in order to accommodate the copy to his remarks, and to give it such further improvements of my own as it shall appear to me to be still susceptible of: which done, I shall remit it instantly to you. Should you have occasion any time to send your Samuel city-ward, I shall be glad if you will charge him with my poetry-box for Johnson, that he may pack the papers in it. This however is not necessary, for they will probably come equally safe under any such cover, as he will give them. I bestowed two mornings in the last week, on the extirpation of elisions only. And from all that part of the second book, which you have not seen, and from the third and fourth completely, have so effectually weeded them out, that in all those quarters you cannot find above three; and those not only pardonable on account of necessity, but such as you would yourself approve, I believe, rather than the vacuity that would be occasioned by their removal. I displaced, I suppose, not less than thirty, some of them horrible creatures, and such as even I myself was glad to be rid of. The same care I shall take throughout the whole translation. I am also a very good boy in another respect: I use all possible diligence to give a graceful gait and movement to such lines as rather hobbled a little before, with this reserve however, that when the sense requires it, or when for the sake of avoiding a monotonous cadence of the lines, of which there is always danger in so long a work, it shall appear to be prudent, I still leave a verse behind me that has some uneasiness in its formation. It is not possible to read Paradise Lost, with an ear for harmony, without being sensible of the great advantage which Milton drew from such a management. One line only occurs to me at present as an instance of what I mean, and I cannot stop to recollect more; but rumbling and rough as it is, it is in my mind, considering the subjects, one of the finest that ever was composed. He is describing hell; and as if the contemplation of such a scene had scared him out of all his poetical wits, he finishes the terrible picture thus,—

Abominable, unutterable, and worse,
Than fancy yet had formed, or fear conceived,
Gorgons and hydras and chimæras dire.

Agree with me, my dear, that the deformity of the first of these three lines is the greatest beauty imaginable. This, however, is only an instance of uncouthness where the *sense* recommends it. Had I the book before me, I could soon fill my sheet with quotations of irregular lines taken from the most beautiful parts of his poem, which he used partly as foils to the rest, and partly to relieve the ear, as I said, from the tedium of an unvaried and perpetual smoothness. This I understand to be one of the great secrets of verse-writing in a piece of great length. Uncritical readers find that they perform a long journey through several hundred pages perhaps without weariness; they find the numbers harmonious, but are not aware of the art by which that harmony is brought to pass, much less suspect that a violation of all harmony on some occasions, is the very thing to which they are not a little indebted for their gratification. Half strained critics are disgusted; they discover that this line and that line limps, but cannot enter into a poet's reasons for making it do so; and critics indeed, who have a well-formed ear and a true classical taste are pleased, and know how to account for it. I know, my beloved cousin, that you will not allow yourself to be of the last mentioned order. You disdain all intelligence in these matters, and I have no doubt of the sincerity with which you do it. But you must pardon me if I estimate your judgement in poetry at a much higher rate than yourself. Of this, at least I am sure, that of all the remarks you have made upon mine not one has bespoke any deficiency of taste or judgement in the maker. On the contrary, I have seen good reason to acquiesce in them all, the *cask* excepted, which is a word that the Greek makes necessary, and the "*gently away*," which I do not pretend to be no blemish, but an excusable one.

Than the broad Hellespont in all his parts,

—so it shall stand, my dear, in the volume, you may rest assured; for though I have in my own mind stickled much for the insertion of the word *whole*, as in that place emphatical, I am become now a convert to your opinion, and judge

the line mended by the change: smoother it is, no doubt, and sufficiently emphatical into the bargain.

Many thanks for Mr. Hornby's note, (whom, by the way, I before called Stanley, not being able to read his name, even in his own handwriting,) every such piece of information is a clap on the back, the effect of which I feel instantly in my head, and write the better for it. The Task has succeeded beyond my utmost expectations; if Homer succeed as well,—and it shall not fail through any negligence of mine, I shall account my fortune, as a poet, made for ever.

You must not think too highly of my loyalty. A true Whig always loves a good King. But this by way of parenthesis.—I was going to observe that the day puts me in mind of June,—clear sun and soft air. Mrs. Unwin never walks in the garden without looking at the borders to consider which of all the flowers will be blown in June. She has my fear of strangers, but she has no fear of *you*. *Au contraire*, she, as well as somebody else, most heartily loves and longs to see you.

Adieu, my dear coz. ever yours, W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, March 29, 1786.

ANIMATED by the hope that, if you could be furnished with an abode at Olney, you might possibly make it in some sort the place of your residence, at least in the summer season, Mrs. Unwin and I have talked, thought, and enquired to the very bottom of that subject, and have been constantly occupied in it, ever since the receipt of your dear letter, which contains nothing but what is comfortable, and which contains some encouragement of an expectation that is more comfortable than all the rest. Olney, you are to understand, though much improved since our first acquaintance with it, is rather a poor town, and contains but one house except our own, that is not occupied by a trade, and that one is by no means to be got at. But we are just now come home after having taken an exact survey of such a one as is in many respects the very thing we wish, though not in all. It has what may fairly be called in the country, a very good parlour, and very neatly furnished. Over it is a very good chamber, large and in good order; and in it a *very good bed*. It has also a kitchen, roomy enough, with a good fire-place close to a good sash window, and I be-

lieve in all respects commodious. There is also a very pretty garden, that has been famous in Olney these many years, for its neatness and smartness; and therein is a root-house, which will be at your service, and where you may drink tea if you choose it. It is so situated that you may walk into the country in three different directions, without having any part of the town to traverse. The rooms that you will occupy are all well sashed; the parlour window and the chamber window are both Venetian. The people themselves are very honest, sober, elderly folks, and quite respectable. They carry on a trade, but a very neat and silent one;—they are dealers in lace. The house has a modern face, and was rebuilt but a short time before we came to Olney. For these accommodations they ask twenty pounds a year. All this, my dear, is well, and pleases us at the heart. But now comes a difficulty; servants must be provided for, and how shall we find room for them? Adjoining to your chamber, for so I call it, I hope, prophetically, is a very decent room in which your own maid might repose herself to her wish. But then there is an apprentice in the case who at present has possession of it, for whom, while he stays, there is no other; and of whose departure there is no hope till the end of August. One of the maids might sleep with the maid of the house, if she has no objection to it; but the room that I have just mentioned is the only spare servant's-room that the house afford. It might possibly be easy to find lodging for two servants at no great distance, —perhaps, at the next door, but your own woman should certainly be within call. Thus stands the case, my beloved cousin. But you will come, and you will see it all with your own eyes, and then we shall be able to remedy any defects better than we can without you. Do like it if you can. I should tell you that the situation is such that you will never be troubled with an afternoon or evening sun. It is within five minutes walk of our door. There is not in Olney, nor in all the neighbourhood of Olney, a ready-furnished house or lodging to be found besides. As to the rooms once occupied by Lady Austen, they are, alas! out of the question. She furnished them herself, and at present the walls are bare. They are in the vicarage, which at that time was occupied by curate, wife, and family. But that curate has removed to London, and now preaches at the Lock; and the present one is a single man,

and has not, I suppose, much more furniture than the Shunamite bestowed upon Elisha when she lodged him on the wall of her house. We have learned, however, on enquiry, that two rooms excepted, the whole is vacant. The house that I have described, as far as parlour, chamber, and kitchen are concerned, is so exactly the thing that I think would suit you, that neither I nor Mrs. Unwin can help cherishing a hope that some way or other matters may be made to fadge.

I knew, my dear, that I should alarm you with my panegyric upon rough verses, and when I had ended all that I had to say upon this subject, I laughed, and said to myself, now will my poor cousin expect nothing but rumble, rumble, rumble. I have said so much in praise of hobbling lines, that if she meets with a line that does not halt like a lame post-horse, she will think herself happy, and will say, Well done, cousin that's something like! I wish it were always such! Well then, my cousin, as much of it shall be smooth and graceful, as I can possibly make so, and Mrs. Unwin can witness for me that I spare no labour. You are perfectly right in all that you have said on the matter; there can be no dignity in simplicity unless it have elegance also, and that is the point at which I drive continually. Fear not that you will take me from my business. For two hours every morning, and for the same time every evening, I determine to forget that you exist, and that to converse with you is to me worth more than all that Homer ever composed. You say I flatter you. I never did in my life. You have an admirable memory,—recollect if you can a single compliment that I ever paid you. No, my cousin, I did not flatter you, neither do I now, when I tell you that I never could find an opportunity.

Your kindness in visiting Johnson for my sake I feel sensibly, as I do, indeed, the whole long series of your unwearied and most friendly services. Though I hear from you but once a week, I have the comfort of knowing to a certainty that I am every day of the week in your thoughts, and if I wish at any time with more than common ardour for fame and honour, it is as much with a view to your gratification as my own. In truth, I believe I may say more, for I not unfrequently feel a most unaccountable stupidity on that subject, and such a one as makes me wonder that I should ever acquire the smallest portion of either. But it is not always so. I rejoice that the

General is pleased; if it pleases him to know that I have a warm and sincere affection for him, he may safely indulge himself in that persuasion.

Adieu, my ever beloved. WM. COWPER.

See what habit has done, it has made me skip over the middle of the page without occasion. But I have two or three things in reserve that will fill it sufficiently. First for my health. Mrs. Unwin and I are both agreed that I have pumped as long as pumping is good. The last emetic sensibly did me harm. It is a week this day since I took it, and I have not yet recovered the effect of it. I have more fever and a more uneasy stomach than I had before. I mean therefore to discontinue the use of them for the present. I boasted that I was growing fat, but I may now boast that I am grown lean, which at my time of life is perhaps the prouder boast of the two. There is no better air in the world than the air of Olney in summer-time. The whole country is either rock or gravel at the depth of a few feet. But in the winter I suspect that it is rather agueish, for such distempers are very frequent here at that season; not that we rich rogues are ever so affected, the evil is confined merely to the poor. But we are built on the river's brink, and in the winter the adjoining meadows are often laid under water, which is, I suppose, the cause of it. I send you all that I have to send in the complimentary style. A note of Lord Hamilton's that was rather flattering, I have burnt. Certain sayings of my poor friend Bagot when he was here, I do not send, because I have not the courage to write them. I have heard nothing more from him since the death of his amiable wife, but I have thought sometimes of writing to him again.—I have read Hannah More's Sacred Dramas with great pleasure; I honour her both for her subjects, and for the manner in which she has set them forth.—I could add, but want room. Good bye, neighbour.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, April 1, 1786.

I HAVE made you wait long for an answer, and am now obliged to write in a hurry. But lest my longer silence should alarm you, hurried as I am, still I write. I told you, if I mistake not, that the circle of my correspondence has lately been

enlarged; and it seems still increasing, which, together with my poetical business, makes an *hour* a *momentous* affair. Pardon an unintentional pun. You need not fear for my health. It suffers nothing by my employment. I hope also that you have no need to fear lest I should hereafter suffer by disappointment. No care shall be wanting on my part to guard against it. I return you many thanks for all your friendly services in the matter of subscription. When you saw Johnson that business was so much in its infancy, that it was not likely that many names should have been entered in his book. Neither General Cowper, nor his son, nor Lady Hesketh have yet given in their lists. The latter has only communicated a few names at Johnson's, and probably a few at Walker's also, and at Debrett's, for the present honour of the catalogue, and that they may breed more. But the bulk of their collection is still in reserve. In the meantime they give me the warmest encouragement, and have no doubt themselves of a numerous subscription.—That the price should be thought too high, I must rather wonder. The immense labour of the work considered, and the price of Pope's first edition also considered, which was seven guineas, it does not appear to me extravagant. I question if there is a poet in the three kingdoms, or in any kingdom, who would sell such a commodity for less. Two or three guineas may now perhaps be as important as seven were fifty years ago, and I suppose that they are; but if every thing else is grown dearer, why should the produce of the brain in particular grow cheap? We may comfort ourselves, too, with reflecting that twenty subscribers at two guineas are just as good as forty at one.

We, who in general see no company, are at present in expectation of a great deal; at least, if three different visits may be called so. Mr. and Mrs. Powley, in the first place, are preparing for a journey southward. She is far from well, but thinks herself well enough to travel, and feels an affectionate impatience for another sight of Olney. A long time since I desired Johnson to send a volume of the Task to your house, intended for Mr. Powley. Mr. Emsal was to have taken it with him into the north, but Mr. Powley has not received it, so I suppose that Johnson forgot. I shall be obliged to you if you will let me know.

In the next place, we expect, as soon as the season shall

turn up bright and warm, General Cowper and his son. I have not seen him these twenty years and upwards; but our intercourse having been lately revived, is likely to become closer, warmer, and more intimate than ever.

Lady Hesketh also comes down in June; and if she can be accommodated with any thing in the shape of a dwelling at Olney, talks of making it always, in part, her summer residence. It has pleased God that I should, like Joseph, be put into a well; and because there are no Midianites in the way to deliver me, therefore my friends are coming down into the well to see me.

I wish you,—we both wish you, all happiness in your new habitation: at least, you will be sure to find the situation more commodious. I thank you for all your hints concerning my work, which shall be duly attended to. You may assure all whom it may concern, that all offensive elisions will be done away. With Mrs. Unwin's love to yourself and Mrs. Newton, I remain, my dear friend, affectionately yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

April 3, Mond. 1786.

HAVE you the hardiness to bid me wait till August for your coming, or even to suggest such an idea to me, who have been so long numbering off days and weeks with impatient expectation of June? My cousin, I will not wait till August, neither can Mrs. Unwin wait till August. I insist, and she entreats, that you come at the time appointed. Is there any thing future to which we look forward with equal pleasure? With pleasure, indeed, we expect the General; I have not, save yourself, a friend whom I should expect with more; but you with pleasure peculiar and above all. Come then! difficulties will perhaps vanish at your appearance; fifty points may be adjusted when you are on the spot, not one of which can be touched without you. Of this be sure, that by some means or other you shall have a place at Olney. The project in hand will probably in the end succeed, and if it should not, others may be started, but not till you come. You have given a hope that will not be relinquished while in Olney may be found one brick or stone upon another. A lodging for the present is ready for you, even should you come to-morrow.

I love you, and thank you for all your hints concerning the General. Suspect not from any thing said above, that my affection for him is not as warm as you wish it to be. It is; and will, I doubt not, increase in fervour. But with him I have an intimacy to make. With you I have always had one, however long interrupted, and the place that you have held with me, you will ever hold, should we outlive the years of Methusalem. But, as I said, I thank you for those hints, and if he have any little likings to be gratified, (for who has not some?) you cannot do a kinder thing by us than to give us instruction in them all; for we sincerely wish to make his abode here as pleasant to him as possible. Henry comes with him. Give me a little history of *him* also, for him I have never seen since he was an urchin. As to the affair of religious conversation, fear me not lest I should trespass upon his peace in that way. Your views, my dear, upon the subject of a proper conduct in that particular, are mine also. When I left St. Alban's, I left it under impressions of the existence of a God, and of the truth of Scripture, that I had never felt before. I had unspeakable delight in the discovery, and was impatient to communicate a pleasure to others that I found so superior to every thing that bears the name. This eagerness of spirit, natural to persons newly informed, and the less to be wondered at in me who had just emerged from the horrors of despair, made me imprudent, and, I doubt not, troublesome to many. Forgetting that I had not *those* blessings at my command, which it is God's peculiar prerogative to impart—spiritual light and affections, I required, in effect, of all with whom I conversed that they should see with my eyes; and stood amazed that the Gospel, which with me was all in all, should meet with opposition, or should occasion disgust in any. But the Gospel could not be the word of God if it did not; for it foretells its own reception among men, and describes it as exactly such. Good is intended, but harm is done too often by the zeal with which I was at that time animated. But as in affairs of this life, so in religious concerns likewise, experience begets some wisdom in all who are not incapable of being taught. I do not now, neither have I for a long time, made it my practice to force the subject of evangelical truth on any. I received it not from man myself, neither can any man receive it from me. God is light, and

from him all light must come: to *His* teaching, therefo leave those whom I was once so alert to instruct myself. man asks my opinion, or calls for an account of my faith shall have it; otherwise I trouble him not. Pulpits for pre ing, and the parlour, the garden, and the walk abroad friendly and agreeable conversation.

I am grieved at what you tell me of the General's stat health. I fear that he carries his death's wound about l The precariousness of *his* life makes me feel, if possible, more comfort that yours seem to be held by a stronger ten May you be spared as long as I am spared, for having fo you again, I am determined never to lose you more. I delighted too that my uncle at his years is so stout. May long continue so!

Mr. Madan and I were never correspondents. Once twice, however, I have had an occasional letter from him, last Friday brought me another. I was, as you may supp surprised. He wrote merely to rectify, as he accounts it, typography. *Placed* he would have printed *plac'd*, and of all words terminating in *ed*, and usually in former ti abridged. But I shall not accede,—I cannot indeed, to counsel. Johnson long since, and the General lately, rec mended to me the contrary practice; and the fashion of day makes it necessary. It is also a real improvement, the judgement corrects the eye, and in reading reduces syllables to their just number: add to which, we have no n to make pronunciation of our language more difficult to forei ers than it is of necessity, which yet must be the certain c sequence of spelling one way and pronouncing another. *plac'd*, according to the rule by which we make *c* before a c sonant hard, ought to pronounced *plackd*. But too mucl this. He wrote me a dry letter; but *some things* consider it did him honour in my account, because it proves that interests himself in my work, notwithstanding all.

I wrote, my dearest cousin, to the General on Saturc and then told him that he would not receive my bundle poetry in less than a fortnight. At that time I thought detaining the third, fourth, and fifth books till I should h re-revised the first, and then that I would send them all once. But I have changed my mind. Fuseli is at pres *out of* work. It would not be civil to make him wait long

more, and the three last-mentioned books are ready; I shall therefore, as before, send them to you; you will communicate with the General; and he to Fuseli. They will set off on Wednesday by Wellingborough coach. The first quire destined to Dr. Maty's inspection I am now going to take in hand. Should I find it necessary to transcribe the whole or much of it, that business, and the correction of it together, will necessarily take time, but you shall have it as soon as possible. My dear, stroke my pate, and say that I am a good child. I send you, I suppose, above two thousand lines, and not two hundred in the whole of the first translation. In fact, I am making a new translation, and find that the work will be much a gainer by it. I grudge no pains so that I may but be a famous poet, and make you as proud as I wish you to be of your cousin in a corner. *Apropos de ça,*—if I have not visited my neighbours, it has been owing to many lions in the way; to a dread of strangers, increased by having seen none for many years; to a total incapacity through indisposition, but very lately, in part, removed; and to necessity, arising from the following important consideration, I keep no horse, and the hackneys of Olney are not ostensible; chaises are become more expensive than ever, and some of the country gentlemen (Mr. Wright in particular) who have made advances, live too distant to be reached on foot. I have not sent to Kerr for these reasons; he depended, by his own avowal, principally on emetics, which seem to fail, though I have neither exceeded nor fallen short; the tincture that he has given me is, by his account of it, of two that are the best in the world for stomach cases, the most efficacious; therefore nothing better is to be expected from him of that kind: and the approaching summer gives me hope better founded than any I can build upon medicine, of open pores, and consequently of relief, if not of a cure. My fever is not worth a thought: I suppose I have had more or less of it almost all my life.—I am now rummaging things together.—I dedicate to whomsoever you shall choose. —I have two dozen of wine and four bottles.—If you should call at Debrett's, pray search the book for the name of Throckmorton in particular. I knew not that Sephus had so ennobled my subscription, till you told me. I hold myself much obliged to him, and so shall tell him, when time shall serve. I love and honour my uncle for his very handsome notice of

me on the occasion. Our politics do not jar; in the principl we are two tallies. I only differ from you a little touching th king's head. He had, through ill advice or want of honesty acted with great duplicity. He was either to reign or die there was no alternative. None dared to trust him;—the ar was the consequence. Adieu, my dear-fellow pilgrim in al our pleasant places, for such you shall be.

Ever affectionately yours, WM. COWPER.

I tell you a remarkable coincidence of dates and events: I received your present of wine on my birth-day, November 26 the desk on the 7th of December, the day when I left London and my snuff-box, &c. from Anonymous on the 24th of January on which day, twelve years ago, I plunged into a melancholy that made me almost an infant. I cannot bear to be so concis as want of room obliged me to be on the other side, respecting the wine. Your kindness in making the inquiry is to me better than the wine itself: this is a literal truth, and you may credit it without the least reserve. I had a little of my own when the hamper came, which is the cause of my present abundance. Once more bless you!

The most evident necessity presents itself for your coming in June. We just now learn that these clever apartments cannot be had. The son is to succeed the apprentice in the second chamber. We have offered a bed in our house during your stay, but it is not accepted. There is a tight little house opposite, which I dare say you may have, that will hold you and suite, but it has a west aspect. Perhaps by open windows and curtains it might be kept cool. Mother and daughter only live in it.

Mrs. Unwin begs me to give her most affectionate respects. If you understood Latin, I could tell you, in an elegant line from Horace, how much we both think of you, and talk of you, and long to see you. Dearest cousin, adieu!

We have expedients *in petto* for settling you at Olney, some of which will surely succeed, but which we will not discuss till you come, that is to say—in June. This is positively the last postscript.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Monday, April 10, 1786.

That's my good cousin! now I love you! now I will think o

June as you do, that it is the pleasantest of all months, unless you should happen to be here in November too, and make it equally delightful. Before I shall have finished my letter, Mrs. Unwin will have taken a view of the house concerning which you inquire, and I shall be able to give you a circumstantial account of it. The man who built it is lately dead. He had been a common sailor, and assisted under Wolfe and Amherst at the taking of Quebec. When we came hither he was almost pennyless, but climbing by degrees into the lace-business, amassed money, and built the house in question. Just before he died, having an enterprising genius, he put almost his whole substance to hazard in sending a large cargo of lace to America, and the venture failing, he has left his widow in penury and distress. For this reason, I conclude that she will have no objection to letting as much of her house as my cousin will have occasion for, and have therefore given you this short history of the matter. The bed is the best in the town, and the honest tar's folly was much laughed at, when it was known that he, who had so often swung in a hammock, had given twenty pounds for a bed. But now I begin to hope that he made a wiser bargain than I once thought it. She is no gentlewoman, as you may suppose, but she is nevertheless a very quiet, decent, sober body, and well respected among her neighbours.

But Hadley, my dearest cousin, what is to be said of Hadley? Only this at present, that having such an inhabitant as Mr. Burrows, and the hope belonging to it of such another inhabitant as yourself, it has all charms, all possible recommendations. Yes; had I the wings that David wished for, I would surely stretch them to their utmost extent that I might reach any place where I should have you to converse with perhaps half the year. But alas, my dear, instead of wings, I have a chain and a collar; the history of which collar and chain Mrs. Unwin shall give you when you come; else I would fly, and she would fly also, with the utmost alacrity to Hadley, or whithersoever you should call us, for Olney has no hold upon us in particular. Here have we no family connexions, no neighbours with whom we can associate, no friendships. If the country is pleasant, so also are other countries; and so far as income is concerned, we should not, I suppose, find ourselves in a more expensive situation at Hadley, or any where,

than here. But there are lets and hinderances which no power of man can remove, which will make your poor heart ache, my dear, when you come to know them. I will not say that they can never be removed, because I will not set bounds to that which has no bounds—the mercy of God; but of the removal of them there is no present apparent probability. I knew a Mr. Burrows once; it was when I lived in the Temple; so far knew him that we simpered at each other when we met, and on opposite sides of the way touched hats. This Mr. Burrows, though at that time a young man, was rather remarkable for corpulence, and yet tall. He was at the bar. On a sudden I missed him, and was informed soon after that he had taken orders. Is it possible that your Mr. Burrows and mine can be the same? The imagination is not famous for taking good likenesses of persons and faces that we never saw. In general the picture that we draw in our minds of an *inconnu* is of all possible pictures the most unlike the original. So it has happened to me in this instance: my fancy assured me that Mr. Burrows was a slim, elegant young man, dressed always to the very point of exactness, with a sharp face, a small voice, a delicate address, and the gentlest manners. Such was my dream of Mr. Burrows, and how my dream of him came to be such I know not, unless it arose from what I seemed to have collected out of the several letters in which you have mentioned him. From them I learned that he has wit, sense, taste, and genius, with which qualities I do not generally connect the ideas of bulk and rotundity; and from them I also learned that he has numerous connexions at your end of the town, where the company of those who have any thing rough in their exterior is least likely to be coveted. So it must have come to pass that I made to myself such a very unsuitable representation of him. But I am not sorry that he is such as he is. He is no loser by the bargain, in my account. I am not the less delighted with his high approbation, and wish for no better fortune as a poet, than always so to please such men as Mr. Burrows. I will not say, my dear, that you yourself gain any advantage in my opinion by the difference; for to seat you higher there than you were always seated, is not possible. I will only observe in this instance, as always in all instances, I discover a proof of your own good sense and discernment, who finding in Mr. Burrows a mind so deserving of

your esteem and regard, have not suffered your eye to prejudice you against it; a *faux pas* into which I have known ladies of very good understanding betrayed ere now, I assure you. Had there been a question last year of our meeting at Olney, I should have felt myself particularly interested in this inattention of yours to the figure, for the sake of its contents; for at that time I had rather more body than it became a man who pretends to public approbation as a poet, to carry about him. But, thanks to Dr. Kerr, I do not at present measure an inch more in the girth than is perfectly consistent with the highest pretensions in that way. Apollo himself is hardly less chargeable with prominence about the waist than I am.

I by no means insist upon making ladies of the Trojan women, unless I can reconcile you to the term. But I must observe in the first place, that though in our language the word be of modern use, it is likewise very ancient. We read in our oldest Bibles of the elect *Lady*, and of Babylon the *Lady* of kingdoms. In the next place, the Grecians, Homer at least, when a woman of rank is accosted, takes care in many instances that she shall be addressed in a style suited to her condition, for which purpose he employs a word more magnificent in its amount than even lady, and which literally signifies very little less than goddess. The word that I mean—that I may make it legible to you, is *Daimonie*. There were, no doubt, in Troy,—but I will say no more of it. I have that to write about to my English lady, that makes all the ladies of antiquity nothing worth to me.

We are at this moment returned from the house above mentioned. The parlour is small and neat, not a mere cupboard, but very passable: the chamber is better, and quite smart. There is a little room close to your own for Mrs. Eaton, and there is room for Cookee and Samuel. The terms are half a guinea a week; but it seems as if we were never to take a step without a stumble. The kitchen is bad,—it has, indeed, never been used except as a washhouse; for people at Olney do not eat and drink as they do in other places. I do not mean, my dear, that they quaff nectar or feed on ambrosia, but *tout au contraire*. So what must be done about this abominable kitchen? It is out of doors: that is not amiss. It has neither range nor jack: that is terrible. But then range and jack are not unattainables: they may be easily supplied.

And if it were not—abominable kitchen that it is, no bigger than half an egg-shell, shift might be made. The good woman is content that your servants should eat and drink in her parlour, but expects that they shall disperse themselves when they have done. But whither, who can say? unless into the arbour in the garden, for that they should solace themselves in said kitchen were hardly to be expected. While I write this, Mrs. U. is gone to attempt a treaty with the linendraper over the way, which, if she succeeds, will be best of all, because the rooms are better, and it is just at hand. I must halt till she returns.—She returns;—nothing done. She is gone again to another place. Once more I halt. Again she returns and opens the parlour door with these tidings:—"I have succeeded beyond my utmost hopes. I went to Maurice Smith's, (he you must know, my dear, is a Jack-of-all-trades;) I said, do you know if Mr. Brightman could and would let lodgings ready furnished to a lady with three servants? Maurice's wife calls out, (she is a Quaker,) Why dost thee not take the vicarage?' I replied, There is no furniture. 'Pshaw!' quoth Maurice's wife; 'we will furnish it for thee, and at the lowest rate:—from a bed to a platter we will find all.'"—And what do you intend now? said I to Mrs. Unwin. "Why now," quoth she, "I am going to the curate to hear what *he* says." So away she goes, and in about twenty minutes returns.—"Well, now it is all settled. Lady H. is to have all the vicarage, except two rooms, at the rate of ten guineas a year; and Maurice will furnish it for five guineas from June to November, inclusive." So, my dear, you and your train are provided for to my heart's content. They are Lady Austen's lodgings, only with more room, and at the same price. You have a parlour sixteen feet by fourteen, chamber ditto; a room for your own maid, near to your own, that I have occupied many a good time; an exceeding good garret for Cookee, and another ditto, at a convenient distance, for Samuel; a cellar, a good kitchen, the use of the garden;—in short, all that you can want. Give us our commission in your next, and all shall be ready by the first of June. You will observe, my beloved cousin, that it is not in all above eight shillings a week in the whole year, or but a trifle more. And the furniture is really smart, and the beds good. But you must find your own linen. *Come then*, my beloved cousin, for I am determined that,

whatsoever king shall reign, you shall be *Vicar* of Olney. Come and cheer my heart. I have left many things unsaid, but shall note them another time. Adieu!

Ever yours, W. C.

I am so charmed with the subject that concludes my letter that I grudge every inch of paper to any other. Yet must I allow myself space to say that Lord Dartmouth's behaviour to you at the concert has won my heart to him more than ever. It was such a well-timed kindness to me, and so evidently performed with an equal design of giving pleasure to you, that I love him for it at my heart. I have never, indeed, at any time, had occasion to charge him, as I know that many have done, with want of warmth in his friendship.—I honour you, my dear, for your constellation of nobles. I rejoice that the contents of my box have pleased you: may I never write any thing that does not! My friend Bull brought me to-day the last Gentleman's Magazine. There your cousin is held up again. Oh rare coz!

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, Olney, April 17, 1786.

If you will not quote Solomon, my dearest cousin, I will. He says, and as beautiful as truly—"Hope deferred maketh the heart sick, but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life!" I feel how much reason he had on his side when he made this observation, and am myself sick of your fortnight's delay.

* * * * * * * *

The vicarage was built by Lord Dartmouth, and was not finished till some time after we arrived at Olney, consequently it is new. It is a smart stone building, well sashed, by much too good for the living, but just what I would wish for you. It has, as you justly concluded from my premises, a garden, but rather calculated for use than ornament. It is square, and well walled, but has neither arbour, nor alcove, nor other shade, except the shadow of the house. But we have two gardens, which are yours. Between your mansion and ours is interposed nothing but an orchard, into which a door opening out of our garden affords us the easiest communication imaginable, will save the roundabout by the town, and make

both houses one. Your chamber-windows look over the river, and over the meadows, to a village called Emberton, and command the whole length of a long bridge, described by a certain poet, together with a view of the road at a distance. Should you wish for books at Olney, you must bring them with you, or you will wish in vain, for I have none but the works of a certain poet, Cowper, of whom perhaps you have heard, and they are as yet but two volumes. They may multiply hereafter; but at present they are no more.

You are the first person for whom I have heard Mrs. Unwin express such feelings as she does for you. She is not profuse in professions, nor forward to enter into treaties of friendship with new faces; but when her friendship is once engaged, it may be confided in even unto death. She loves you already, and how much more will she love you before this time twelvemonth! I have indeed endeavoured to describe you to her, but perfectly as I have you by heart, I am sensible that my picture cannot do you justice. I never saw one that did. Be you what you may, you are much beloved, and will be so at Olney, and Mrs. U. expects you with the pleasure that one feels at the return of a long absent, dear relation; that is to say, with a pleasure such as mine. She sends you her warmest affections.

On Friday I received a letter from dear Anonymous, apprizing me of a parcel that the coach would bring me on Saturday. Who is there in the world that has, or thinks he has, reason to love me to the degree that he does? But it is no matter. He chooses to be unknown, and his choice is, and ever shall be so sacred to me, that if his name lay on the table before me reversed, I would not turn the paper about that I might read it. Much as it would gratify me to thank him, I would turn my eyes away from the forbidden discovery. I long to assure him that those same eyes, concerning which he expresses such kind apprehensions, lest they should suffer by this laborious undertaking, are as well as I could expect them to be, if I were never to touch either book or pen. Subject to weakness, and occasional slight inflammations, it is probable that they will always be; but I cannot remember the time when they enjoyed any thing so like an exemption from those infirmities as at present. One would almost suppose that reading *Homer* were the best ophthalmic in the world. I should be

happy to remove his solicitude on the subject, but it is a pleasure that he will not let me enjoy. Well then, I will be content without it; and so content that, though I believe you, my dear, to be in full possession of all this mystery, you shall never know me, while you live, either directly, or by hints of any sort, attempt to extort, or to steal the secret from you. I should think myself as justly punishable as the Bethshemites, for looking into the ark, which they were not allowed to touch.

I have not sent for Kerr, for Kerr can do nothing but send me to Bath, and to Bath I cannot go for a thousand reasons. The summer will set me up again. I grow fat every day, and shall be as big as Gog or Magog, or both put together, before you come.

I did actually live three years with Mr. Chapman, a solicitor, that is to say, I slept three years in his house; but I lived, that is to say, I spent my days in Southampton Row, as you very well remember. There was I, and the future Lord Chancellor, constantly employed from morning to night in giggling and making giggle, instead of studying the law. O fie, cousin! how could you do so? I am pleased with Lord Thurlow's enquiries about me. If he takes it into that inimitable head of his, he may make a man of me yet. I could love him heartily, if he would but deserve it at my hands. That I did so once is certain. The Duchess of ———, who in the world set her a-going? But if all the duchesses in the world were spinning, like so many whirligigs, for my benefit, I would not stop them. It is a noble thing to be a poet, it makes all the world so lively. I might have preached more sermons than even Tillotson did, and better, and the world would have been still fast asleep; but a volume of verse is a fiddle that puts the universe in motion.

Yours, my dear friend and cousin, W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, April 24, 1786.

YOUR letters are so much my comfort, that I often tremble lest by any accident I should be disappointed; and the more because you have been, more than once, so engaged in company on the writing day, that I have had a narrow escape. Let me give you a piece of good counsel, my cousin: follow

my laudable example —write when you can; take Time's forelock in one hand, and a pen in the other, and so make sure of your opportunity. It is well for me that you write faster than any body, and more in an hour than other people in two, else I know not what would become of me. When I read your letters I hear you talk, and I love talking letters dearly, especially from you. Well! the middle of June will not be always a thousand years off, and when it comes I shall hear you, and see you too, and shall not care a farthing then if you do not touch a pen in a month. By the way, you must either send me, or bring me some more paper, for before the moon shall have performed a few more revolutions I shall not have a scrap left,—and tedious revolutions they are just now, that is certain.

I give you leave to be as peremptory as you please, especially at a distance; but when you say that you are a Cowper, (and the better it is for the Cowpers that such you are, and I give them joy of you, with all my heart,) you must not forget that I boast myself a Cowper too, and have my humours, and fancies, and purposes, and determinations, as well as others of my name, and hold them as fast as they can. *You* indeed tell *me* how often I shall see you when you come! A pretty story truly. I am a *he* Cowper, my dear, and claim the privileges that belong to my noble sex. But these matters shall be settled as my cousin Agamemnon used to say, at a more convenient time.

I shall rejoice to see the letter you promise me, for though I met with a morsel of praise last week, I do not know that the week current is likely to produce me any, and having lately been pretty much pampered with that diet, I expect to find myself rather hungry by the time when your next letter shall arrive. It will therefore be very opportune. The morsel, above alluded to, came from—whom do you think? From ———, but she desires that her authorship may be a secret. And in my answer I promised not to divulge it except to you. It is a pretty copy of verses, neatly written, and well turned, and when you come you shall see them. I intend to keep all pretty things to myself till then, that they may serve me as a bait to lure you hither more effectually. The last letter that *I had* from ——— I received so many years since, that it *seems* as if it had reached me a good while before I was born.

I was grieved at the heart that the General could not come, and that illness was in part the cause that hindered him. I have sent him, by his express desire, a new edition of the first book, and half the second. He would not suffer me to send it to you, my dear, lest you should post it away to Maty at once. He did not give that reason, but being shrewd, I found it.

The grass begins to grow, and the leaves to bud, and every thing is preparing to be beautiful against you come.

Adieu! W. C.

You enquire of our walks, I perceive, as well as of our rides: they are beautiful. You enquire also concerning a cellar: you have two cellars. Oh! what years have passed since we took the same walks, and drank out of the same bottle! but a few more weeks and then!

TO LADY HESKETH.

May 1, 1786.

You need not trouble yourself, my dearest cousin, about paper, my kind and good friend the General having undertaken of his own mere motion to send me all that I ever want, whether for transcript or correspondence. My dear, there is no possible project within the compass of invention, by which you can be released from the necessity of keeping your own nags at Olney, if you keep your carriage here. At the Swan they have no horses, or, which is equally negative in such a case, they have but one. At the Bull, indeed, they keep a chaise; but, not to mention the disagreeable of using one inn and hiring from another, or the extortionate demands that the woman of the Bull ever makes when any thing either gentle or noble is so unhappy as to fall into her hands, her steeds are so seldom disengaged, that you would find the disappointments endless. The chaise of course is engaged equally, and the town of Olney affords nothing else into which you could put your person. All these matters taken together, and another reason with them, which I shall presently subjoin,—it appeared to us so indispensable a requisite to your comfort here that you should have your own, both carriage and horses, that we have this day actually engaged accommodation for them at the Swan aforesaid.

Our walks are, as I told you, beautiful; but it is a walk to get at them; and though when you come, I shall take you into training, as the jockeys say, I doubt not that I shall make a nimble and good walker of you in a short time, you would find, as even I do in warm weather, that the preparatory steps are rather too many in number. Weston, which is our pleasantest retreat of all, is a mile off, and there is not in that whole mile to be found so much shade as would cover you. Mrs. Unwin and I have for many years walked thither every day in the year, when the weather would permit; and to speak like a poet, the limes and the elms of Weston can witness for us both how often we have sighed and said,—"Oh! that our garden opened into this grove, or into this wilderness! for we are fatigued before we reach them, and when we have reached them, have not time enough to enjoy them." Thus stands the case, my dear, and the unavoidable *ergo* stares you in the face. Would *I* could do so too just at this moment!—We have three or four other walks, which are all pleasant in their way; but, except one, they all lie at such a distance as you would find heinously incommodious. But Weston, as I said before, is our favourite: of that we are never weary; its superior beauties gained it our preference at the first, and for many years it has prevailed to win us away from all the others. There was, indeed, some time since, in a neighbouring parish called Lavendon, a field, one side of which formed a terrace, and the other was planted with poplars, at whose foot ran the Ouse, that I used to account a little paradise: but the poplars have been felled, and the scene has suffered so much by the loss, that though still in point of prospect beautiful, it has not charms sufficient to attract me now. A certain poët wrote a copy of verses on this melancholy occasion, which, though they have been printed, I dare say you never saw. When you come, therefore, you shall see them; but, as I told you in my last, not before. No, my dear, not a moment sooner; and for the reason in my last given I shall disobey your mandate with respect to those of F. Hill; and for another reason also:—if I copy them, they will occupy all the rest of my paper, which I cannot spare; and if I enclose the original, I must send my packet to Palace Yard, and you finding that the postman *passed* your door without dropping a letter from me would

conclude that I had neglected to write; and I will not incur such a suspicion in your mind for a moment.

On Saturday,—for sooner than Saturday, we could not, on account of the weather,—we paid our visit at Weston, and a very agreeable visit we found it. We encountered there, besides the family, four ladies, all strange to us. One of them was a Miss Bagot, a sister of my friend Walter's; and another of them was a Mrs. Chester, his sister-in-law. Mr. Chester, his brother, lives at Chicheley, about four miles from Olney. Poor Mrs. Bagot was remembered with tears by Mrs. Chester: she is by every body's account of her a most amiable woman. Such also, I dare say, is Miss Bagot; but the room in which we were received was large, and she sitting at the side of it, exactly opposite to me, I had neither lungs nor courage to halloo at her; therefore nothing passed between us. I chatted a good deal with my neighbours; but you know, my dear, I am not famous for vociferation where there are ears not much accustomed to my voice. Nothing can be more obliging than the behaviour of the Throckmortons has ever been to us: they long since gave us the keys of all their retreats, even of their kitchen-garden. And that you may not suspect your cousin of being any other than a very obliging creature too, I will give you a stroke of his politesse. When they were here they desired to see the garden and greenhouse. I am proud of neither, except in poetry, because there I can fib without lying, and represent them better than they are. However, I conducted them to the sight, and having set each of the ladies with her head in a bush of myrtle, I took out my scissors and cut a bouquet for each of them. When we were with *them* Mrs. Throckmorton told me that she had put all the slips into water, for she should be so glad to make them grow, and asked me if they would strike root. I replied, that I had known such things happen, but believed that they were very rare, and recommended a hot-bed rather, and she immediately resolved that they should have one. Now comes the period at which your cousin shines. In the evening I ordered my labourer to trundle up a wheelbarrow of myrtles and canary lavender, (a most fragrant plant,) to Weston, with which I sent a note to Mrs. Throckmorton, recommending them to her protection. *Dites moi, ma chere, ne suis-je homme tout à fait poli?*

Weston, as I told you, is about a mile off, but in truth it is rather more. Gayhurst is five miles off: I have walked there, but I never walked thither. I have not these many years been such an extravagant tramper as I once was. I did myself no good I believe by pilgrimages of such immoderate length. The Chesters, the Throckmortons, the Wrights, are all of them good-natured agreeable people, and I rejoice, for your sake, that they lie all within your beat. Of the rest of our neighbours I know nothing. They are not, indeed, many. A Mr. Praed lives at a seat called Tyringham, which is also about five miles hence; but him I never saw, save once, when I saw him jump over a rail at Weston. There is a Mr. Towers at a place called Astwoodberry, about seven miles off; but he is a foxhunter merely: and Lord Egmont dwelt in a hired house at a place called Woolaston, at the same distance; but he hired it merely by way of kennel to hold him during the hunting season, and by this time, I suppose, has left it.

The copper is going to work for you again. Fifty gallons of good beer, added to seventy, will serve to moisten your maidens' lips, and the throats of your lacqueys and your coachee's, till the season for brewing returns, for it does not succeed in warm weather.

Mrs. Unwin sends you her affections; and the words that follow I take from her mouth as she delivers them: "Tell Lady Hesketh that I have the sincerest complacency in the expectation of her; and in observing how all things concur and coincide that can bid fair to make her stay at Olney agreeable, insomuch that she seems only to wave her pen and the thing she wants springs up in an instant." May Heaven bless you, my ever dear, dear cousin. Farewell.

Yours, WM. COWPER.

I have heard that Dr. Maty has criticised my specimen with asperity. Is there any truth in this, and how much? or is there none? It has vexed me.—I have a fine passion-tree in a green tub, that I destine to your parlour chimney: it will be full of flowers.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, May 8, 1786.

I DID not at all doubt that your tenderness for my feelings had inclined you to suppress in your letters to me the intelligence

concerning Maty's critique, that yet reached me from another quarter. When I wrote to you I had not learned it from the General, but from my friend Bull, who only knew it by hearsay. The next post brought me the news of it from the first-mentioned, and the critique itself enclosed. Together with it came also a squib discharged against me in the Public Advertiser. The General's letter found me in one of my most melancholy moods, and my spirits did not rise on the receipt of it. The letter indeed that he had cut from the newspaper gave me little pain, both because it contained nothing formidable, though written with malevolence enough, and because a nameless author can have no more weight with his readers than the reason which he has on his side can give him. But Maty's animadversions hurt me more. In part they appeared to me unjust, and in part ill-natured; and yet the man himself being an oracle in every body's account, I apprehended that he had done me much mischief. Why he says that the translation is far from exact, is best known to himself. For I know it to be as exact as is compatible with poetry; and prose translations of Homer are not wanted,—the world has one already. But I will not fill my letter to you with hypercriticisms; I will only add an extract from a letter of Colman's, that I received last Friday, and will then dismiss the subject. It came accompanied by a copy of the specimen, which he himself had amended, and with so much taste and candour that it charmed me. He says as follows:

"One copy I have returned, with some remarks prompted by my zeal for your success, not, Heaven knows, by arrogance or impertinence. I know no other way at once so plain, and so short, of delivering my thoughts on the specimen of your translation, which on the whole I admire exceedingly, thinking it breathes the spirit, and conveys the manner of the original; though having here neither Homer, nor Pope's Homer, I cannot speak precisely of particular lines or expressions, or compare your blank verse with his rhyme, except by declaring that I think blank verse infinitely more congenial to the magnificent simplicity of Homer's hexameters, than the confined couplets, and the jingle of rhyme."——

His amendments are chiefly bestowed on the lines encumbered with elisions, and I will just take this opportunity to tell you, my dear, because I know you to be as much interested in

what I write as myself, that some of the most offensive of those elisions were occasioned by mere criticism. I was fairly hunted into them, by vexatious objections made without end by ——, and his friend, and altered, and altered, till at last I did not care how I altered. Many thanks for ——'s verses, which deserve just the character you give of them. They are neat and easy,—but I would mumble her well, if I could get at her, for allowing herself to suppose for a moment that I praised the Chancellor with a view to emolument. I wrote those stanzas merely for my own amusement, and they slept in a dark closet years after I composed them; not in the least designed for publication. But when Johnson had printed off the longer pieces, of which the first volume principally consists, he wrote me word that he wanted yet two thousand lines to swell it to a proper size. On that occasion it was that I collected every scrap of verse that I could find, and that among the rest. None of the smaller poems had been introduced, or had been published at all with my name, but for this necessity.

Just as I wrote the last word I was called down to Dr. Kerr, who came to pay me a voluntary visit. Were I sick, his cheerful and friendly manner would almost restore me. Air and exercise are his theme; them he recommends as the best physic for me, and in all weathers. Come therefore, my dear, and take a little of this good physic with me, for you will find it beneficial as well as I: come and assist Mrs. Unwin in the reestablishment of your cousin's health. Air and exercise, and she and you together, will make me a perfect Samson. You will have a good house over your head, comfortable apartments, obliging neighbours, good roads, a pleasant country, and in us your constant companions, two who will love you, and do already love you dearly, and with all our hearts. If you are in any danger of trouble, it is from myself, if my fits of dejection seize me; and as often as they do, you will be grieved for me; but perhaps by your assistance I shall be able to resist them better. If there is a creature under heaven, from whose co-operations with Mrs. Unwin I can reasonably expect such a blessing, that creature is yourself. I was not without such attacks when I lived in London, though at that time they were less oppressive; but in your company I was *never* unhappy a whole day in all my life.

Of how much importance is an author to himself! I return

to that abominable specimen again, just to notice Maty's impatient censure of the repetition that you mention: I mean of the word *hand*. In the original there is not a repetition of it. But to repeat a word in that manner, and on such an occasion, is by no means what he calls it, a *modern* invention. In Homer I could show him many such, and in Virgil they abound. Colman, who, in his judgement of classical matters, is inferior to none, says, "*I know not why Maty objects to this expression.*" I could easily change it. But the case standing thus, I know not whether my proud stomach will condescend so low. I rather feel myself disinclined to it.

One evening last week Mrs. Unwin and I took our walk to Weston, and as we were returning through the grove opposite to the house, the Throckmortons presented themselves at the door. They are owners of a house at Weston, at present empty. It is a very good one, infinitely superior to ours. When we drank chocolate with them, they both expressed their ardent desire that we would take it, wishing to have us for nearer neighbours. If you, my cousin, were not so well provided for as you are, and at our very elbow, I verily believe I should have mustered up all my rhetoric to recommend it to you. You might have it for ever without danger of ejectment; whereas your possession of the vicarage depends on the life of the vicar, who is eighty-six. The environs are most beautiful, and the village itself one of the prettiest I ever saw. Add to this, you would step immediately into Mr. Throckmorton's pleasure-ground, where you would not soil your slipper even in winter. A most unfortunate mistake was made by that gentleman's bailiff in his absence. Just before he left Weston last year for the winter, he gave him orders to cut short the tops of the flowering shrubs that lined a serpentine walk in a delightful grove, celebrated by my poetship in a little piece that you remember was called the Shrubbery. The dunce, misapprehending the order, cut down and faggoted up the whole grove, leaving neither tree, bush, nor twig,—nothing but stumps about as high as my ancle. Mrs. Throckmorton told us that she never saw her husband so angry in her life. I judge indeed by his physiognomy, which has great sweetness in it, that he is very little addicted to that infernal passion. But had he cudgelled the man for his cruel blunder, and the havoc made in consequence of it, I could have excused him.

I felt myself really concerned for the Chancellor's illness, and from what I learned of it, both from the papers, and from General Cowper, concluded that he must die. I am accordingly delighted in the same proportion with the news of his recovery. May he live, and live to be still the support of Government! If it shall be his good pleasure to render me personally any material service, I have no objection to it. But Heaven knows, that it is impossible for any living wight to bestow less thought on that subject than myself.—May God be ever with you, my beloved cousin! W. C

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, Olney, May 15, 1786.

FROM this very morning I begin to date the last month of our long separation, and confidently and most comfortably hope that before the fifteenth of June shall present itself, we shall have seen each other. Is it not so? And will it not be one of the most extraordinary eras of my extraordinary life? A year ago, we neither corresponded, nor expected to meet in this world. But this world is a scene of marvellous events, many of them more marvellous than fiction itself would dare to hazard; and, blessed be God! they are not all of the distressing kind. Now and then in the course of an existence, whose hue is for the most part sable, a day turns up that makes amends for many sighs, and many subjects of complaint. Such a day shall I account the day of your arrival at Olney.

Wherefore is it (canst thou tell me?) that together with all those delightful sensations, to which the sight of a long absent dear friend gives birth, there is a mixture of something painful; flutterings, and tumults, and I know not what accompaniments of our pleasure, that are in fact perfectly foreign from the occasion? Such I feel when I think of our meeting; and such I suppose feel you; and the nearer the crisis approaches, the more I am sensible of them. I know beforehand that they will increase with every turn of the wheels that shall convey me to Newport, when I shall set out to meet you; and that when we actually meet, the pleasure, and this unaccountable pain together, will be as much as I shall be able to *support*. I am utterly at a loss for the cause, and can only *resolve* it into that appointment, by which it has been foreor-

dained that all human delights shall be qualified and mingled with their contraries. For there is nothing formidable in you. To me at least there is nothing such, no, not even in your menaces, unless when you threaten me to write no more. Nay, I verily believe, did I not know you to be what you are, and had less affection for you than I have, I should have fewer of these emotions, of which I would have none, if I could help it. But a fig for them all! Let us resolve to combat with, and to conquer them. They are dreams: they are illusions of the judgement. Some enemy that hates the happiness of human kind, and is ever industrious to dash it, works them in us; and their being so perfectly unreasonable as they are is a proof of it. Nothing that is such can be the work of a good agent. This I know too by experience, that, like all other illusions, they exist only by force of imagination, are indebted for their prevalence to the absence of their object, and in a few moments after its appearance cease. So then this is a settled point, and the case stands thus. You will tremble as you draw near to Newport, and so shall I: but we will both recollect that there is no reason why we should, and this recollection will at least have some little effect in our favour. We will likewise both take the comfort of what we know to be true, that the tumult will soon cease, and the pleasure long survive the pain, even as long I trust as we ourselves shall survive it.

What you say of Maty gives me all the consolation that you intended. We both think it highly probable that you suggest the true cause of his displeasure, when you suppose him mortified at not having had a part of the translation laid before him, ere the specimen was published. The General was very much hurt, and calls his censure harsh and unreasonable. He likewise sent me a consolatory letter on the occasion, in which he took the kindest pains to heal the wound that he supposed I might have suffered. I am not naturally insensible, and the sensibilities that I had by nature have been wonderfully enhanced by a long series of shocks, given to a frame of nerves that was never very athletic. I feel accordingly, whether painful or pleasant, in the extreme; am easily elevated, and easily cast down. The frown of a critic freezes my poetical powers, and discourages me to a degree that makes me ashamed of my own weakness. Yet I presently recover my confidence again.

The half of what you so kindly say in your last would at any time restore my spirts, and, being said by you, is infallible. I am not ashamed to confess, that having commenced an author, I am most abundantly desirous to succeed as such. *I have, (what, perhaps, you little suspect me of,) in my nature an infinite share of ambition.* But with it I have at the same time, as you well know, an equal share of diffidence. To this combination of opposite qualities it has been owing that, till lately, I stole through life without undertaking any thing, yet always wishing to distinguish myself. At last I ventured, ventured too in the only path that at so late a period was yet open to me; and am determined, if God have not determined otherwise, to work my way through the obscurity that has been so long my portion, into notice. Every thing therefore that seems to threaten this my favourite purpose with disappointment, affects me nearly. I suppose that all ambitious minds are in the same predicament. He who seeks distinction must be sensible of disapprobation, exactly in the same proportion as he desires applause. And now, my precious cousin, I have unfolded my heart to you in this particular, without a speck of dissimulation. Some people, and good people too, would blame me: but you will not; and they I think would blame without just cause. We certainly do not honour God when we bury, or when we neglect to improve, as far as we may, whatever talent he may have bestowed on us, whether it be little or much. In natural things, as well as in spiritual, it is a never-failing truth, that to him who *hath*, (that is, to him who occupies what he hath diligently, and so as to increase it,) more shall be given. Set me down therefore, my dear, for an industrious rhymer, so long as I shall have the ability. For in this only way is it possible for me, so far as I can see, either to honour God, or to serve man, or even to serve myself.

I rejoice to hear that Mr. Throckmorton wishes to be on a more intimate footing. I am shy, and suspect that he is not very much otherwise; and the consequence has been that we have mutually wished an acquaintance without being able to accomplish it. Blessings on you for the hint that you dropped on the subject of the house at Weston! For the burthen of my song is,—"Since we have met once again, let us never be separated, as we have been, more." W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Olney, May 20, 1786.

BOUT three weeks since I met your sister Chester at Mr. hrockmorton's, and from her learned that you are at Blithfeld, and in health. Upon the encouragement of this information it is that I write now; I should not otherwise have nown with certainty where to find you, or have been equally ee from the fear of unreasonable intrusion. May God be ith you, my friend, and give you a just measure of submission his will, the most effectual of all remedies for the evils of his changing scene. I doubt not that he has granted you his blessing already, and may he still continue it!

Now I will talk a little about myself: for except myself, ving in this *terrarum angulo*, what can I have to talk about? n a scene of perfect tranquillity, and the profoundest silence, am kicking up the dust of heroic narrative, and besieging roy again. I told you that I had almost finished the translation of the Iliad, and I verily thought so;—but I was never nore mistaken. By the time when I had reached the end of he poem, the first book of my version was a twelvemonth ld. When I came to consider it, after having laid it by so ong, it did not satisfy me. I set myself to mend it, and I id so. But still it appeared to me improvable, and that nohing would so effectually secure that point as to give the hole book a new translation. With the exception of very few ines I have so done, and was never in my life so convinced f the soundness of Horace's advice to publish nothing in haste; o much advantage have I derived from doing that twice which thought I had accomplished notably at once. He indeed ecommends nine years' imprisonment of your verses before ou send them abroad: but the ninth part of that time is I elieve as much as there is need of to open a man's eyes upon is own defects, and to secure him from the danger of premature self-approbation. Neither ought it to be forgotten that ine years make so wide an interval between the cup and the ip, that a thousand things may fall out between. New engagements may occur, which may make the finishing of that hich a poet has begun impossible. In nine years he may ise into a situation, or he may sink into one utterly incompatible *with his purpose*. His constitution may break in nine

years, and sickness may disqualify him for improving what he enterprised in the days of health. His inclination may change, and he may find some other employment more agreeable, or another poet may enter upon the same work, and get the start of him. Therefore, my friend Horace, though I acknowledge your principle to be good, I must confess that I think the practice you would ground upon it carried to an extreme. The rigour that I exercised upon the first book, I intend to exercise upon all that follow, and have now actually advanced into the middle of the seventh, no where admitting more than one line in fifty of the first translation. You must not imagine that I had been careless and hasty in the first instance. In truth I had not; but in rendering so excellent a poet as Homer into our language, there are so many points to be attended to, both in respect of language and numbers, that a first attempt must be fortunate indeed if it does not call aloud for a second. You saw the specimen, and you saw, I am sure, one great fault in it: I mean the harshness of some of the elisions. I do not altogether take the blame of these to myself, for into some of them I was actually driven and haunted by a series of reiterated objections made by a critical friend, whose scruples and delicacies teased me out of all my patience. But no such monsters will be found in the volume.

Your brother Chester has furnished me with Barnes's Homer, from whose notes I collect here and there some useful information, and whose fair and legible type preserves me from the danger of being as blind as was my author. I saw a sister of yours at Mr. Throckmorton's; but I am not good at making myself heard across a large room, and therefore nothing passed between us. I felt, however, that she was my friend's sister, and much esteemed her for your sake.

Ever yours, W. C.

P.S. The swan is called *argutus* (I suppose) a *non arguendo*, and *canorus a non canendo*. But whether he be dumb or vocal, more poetical than the eagle or less, it is no matter. A feather of either, in token of your approbation and esteem, will never, you may rest assured, be an offence to me.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, May 25, 1786.

I HAVE at length, my cousin, found my way into my summer

abode. I believe that I described it to you some time since, and will therefore now leave it undescribed. I will only say that I am writing in a bandbox, situated, at least in my account, delightfully, because it has a window in one side that opens into that orchard, through which, as I am sitting here, I shall see you often pass, and which therefore I already prefer to all the orchards in the world. You do well to prepare me for all possible delays, because in this life all sorts of disappointments are possible, and I shall do well, if any such delay of your journey should happen, to practise that lesson of patience which you inculcate. But it is a lesson which, even with you for my teacher, I shall be slow to learn. Being sure however that you will not procrastinate without cause, I will make myself as easy as I can about it, and hope the best. To convince you how much I am under discipline and good advice, I will lay aside a favourite measure, influenced in doing so by nothing but the good sense of your contrary opinion. I had set my heart on meeting you at Newport. In my haste to see you once again, I was willing to overlook many awkwardnesses I could not but foresee would attend it. I put them aside so long as I only foresaw them myself, but since I find that you foresee them too, I can no longer deal so slightly with them. It is therefore determined that we meet at Olney. Much I shall feel, but I will not die if I can help it, and I beg that you will take all possible care to outlive it likewise, for I know what it is to be balked in the moment of acquisition, and should be loath to know it again.

Last Monday, in the evening, we walked to Weston, according to our usual custom. It happened, owing to a mistake of time, that we set out half an hour sooner than usual. This mistake we discovered, while we were in the wilderness. So, finding that we had time before us, as they say, Mrs. Unwin proposed that we should go into the village, and take a view of the house that I had just mentioned to you. We did so, and found it such a one as in most respects would suit you well. But Moses Brown, our vicar, who, as I told you, is in his eighty-sixth year, is not bound to die for that reason. He said himself, when he was here last summer, that he should live ten years longer, and for aught that appears so he may; in which case, for the sake of its near neighbourhood to us, the vicarage has charms for me, that no other place can rival.

But this, and a thousand things more, shall be talked over when you come.

We have been industriously cultivating our acquaintance with our Weston neighbours since I wrote last, and they on their part have been equally diligent in the same cause. I have a notion, that we shall all suit well. I see much in them both that I admire. You know perhaps that they are Catholics.

It is a delightful bundle of praise, my cousin, that you have sent me;—all jasmine and lavender. Whoever the lady is, she has evidently an admirable pen, and a cultivated mind. If a person reads, it is no matter in what language; and if the mind be informed, it is no matter whether that mind belongs to a man or a woman: the taste and the judgement will receive the benefit alike in both. Long before the Task was published, I made an experiment one day, being in a frolicksome mood, upon my friend:—we were walking in the garden, and conversing on a subject similar to these lines,—

> The few that pray at all, pray oft amiss,
> And seeking grace to' improve the present good,
> Would urge a wiser suit than asking more.

I repeated them, and said to him with an air of *nonchalance*, "Do you recollect those lines? I have seen them somewhere, where are they?" He put on a considering face, and after some deliberation replied,—"O, I will tell you where they must be;—in the Night Thoughts." I was glad my trial turned out so well, and did not undeceive him. I mention this occurrence only in confirmation of the letter-writer's opinion; but at the same time I do assure you, on the faith of an honest man, that I never in my life designed an imitation of Young, or of any other writer; for mimicry is my abhorrence,—at least in poetry.

Assure yourself, my dearest cousin, that both for your sake, since you make a point of it, and for my own, I will be as philosophically careful as possible that these fine nerves of mine shall not be beyond measure agitated when you arrive. In truth, there is much greater probability that they will be benefited, and greatly too. Joy of heart, from whatever occasion it may arise, is the best of all nervous medicines; and I should not wonder if such a turn given to my spirits should have even a lasting effect, of the most advantageous kind, upon them. You must not imagine neither, that I am on the whole in any

great degree subject to nervous affections. Occasionally I am, and have been these many years, much liable to dejection; but at intervals, and sometimes for an interval of weeks, no creature would suspect it. For I have not that which commonly is a symptom of such a case belonging to me;—I mean extraordinary elevation in the absence of Mr. Bluedevil. When I am in the best health, my tide of animal sprightliness flows with great equality, so that I am never, at any time, exalted in proportion as I am sometimes depressed. My depression has a cause, and if that cause were to cease, I should be as cheerful thenceforth, and perhaps for ever, as any man need be. But, as I have often said, Mrs. Unwin shall be my expositor.

Adieu, my beloved cousin! God grant that our friendship which, while we could see each other, never suffered a moment's interruption, and which so long a separation has not in the least abated, may glow in us to our last hour, and be renewed in a better world, there to be perpetuated for ever!

For you must know that I should not love you half so well, if I did not believe you would be my friend to eternity. There is not room enough for friendship to unfold itself in full bloom, in such a nook of life as this. Therefore I am, and must, and will be, Yours for ever, W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, May 29, 1786.

Thou dear, comfortable cousin, whose letters, among all that I receive, have this property peculiarly their own, that I expect them without trembling, and never find any thing in them that does not give me pleasure; for which therefore I would take nothing in exchange that the world could give me, save and except that for which I must exchange them soon, (and happy shall I be to do so,) your own company. That, indeed, is delayed a little too long; to my impatience at least it seems so, who find the spring, backward as it is, too forward, because many of its beauties will have faded before you will have an opportunity to see them. We took our customary walk yesterday in the wilderness at Weston, and saw, with regret, the laburnums, syringas, and guelder-roses, some of them blown, and others just upon the point of blowing, and could not help observing—all these will be gone before Lady Hesketh comes! Still however there will be roses, and jasmine, and honey-

suckle, and shady walks, and cool alcoves, and you will partake them with us. But I want you to have a share of every thing that is delightful here, and cannot bear that the advance of the season should steal away a single pleasure before you can come to enjoy it.

Every day I think of you, and almost all the day long; I will venture to say, that even *you* were never so expected in your life. I called last week at the Quaker's to see the furniture of your bed, the fame of which had reached me. It is, I assure you, superb, of printed cotton, and the subject classical. Every morning you will open your eyes on Phaeton kneeling to Apollo, and imploring his father to grant him the conduct of his chariot for a day. May your sleep be as sound as your bed will be sumptuous, and your nights at least will be well provided for.

I shall send up the sixth and seventh books of the Iliad shortly, and shall address them to you. You will forward them to the General. I long to show you my workshop, and to see you sitting on the opposite side of my table. We shall be as close packed as two wax figures in an old fashioned picture frame. I am writing in it now. It is the place in which I fabricate all my verse in summer time. I rose an hour sooner than usual this morning, that I might finish my sheet before breakfast, for I must write this day to the General.

The grass under my windows is all bespangled with dewdrops, and the birds are singing in the apple trees, among the blossoms. Never poet had a more commodious oratory in which to invoke his Muse.

I have made your heart ache too often, my poor dear cousin, with talking about my fits of dejection. Something has happened that has led me to the subject, or I would have mentioned them more sparingly. Do not suppose, or suspect that I treat you with reserve; there is nothing in which I am concerned that you shall not be made acquainted with. But the tale is too long for a letter. I will only add, for your present satisfaction, that the cause is not exterior, that it is not within the reach of human aid, and that yet I have a hope myself, and Mrs. Unwin a strong persuasion of its removal. I am indeed even now, and have been for a considerable time, sensible of a change for the better, and expect, with good reason, a comfortable lift from you. Guess then, my beloved cousin,

what wishes I look forward to the time of your arrival, whose coming I promise myself not only pleasure but of mind,—at least an additional share of it. At present n uncertain and transient guest with me; but the joy which I shall see and converse with you at Olney, may ps make it an abiding one. W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, June 4 and 5, 1786.

my cousin, you begin already to fear and quake. What o am I, compared with you! I have no fears of *you;* contrary am as bold as a lion. I wish that your car- were even now at the door. You should soon see with nuch courage I would face you. But what cause have or fear? Am I not your cousin, with whom you have red in the fields of Freemantle, and at Bevis's Mount? used to read to you, laugh with you, till our sides have , at any thing, or nothing? And am I in these respects altered? You will not find me so; but just as ready to , and to wander, as you ever knew me. A cloud perhaps ome over me now and then, for a few hours, but from s I was never exempted. And are not you the identical with whom I have performed all these feats? The very et whom I saw, for the first time, at De Grey's in Norfolk ? (It was on a Sunday, when you came with my uncle unt to drink tea there, and I had dined there, and was just back to Westminster.) If these things are so, and I am that you cannot gainsay a syllable of them all, then this quence follows; and I do not promise myself more plea- from your company than I shall be sure to find. Then re my cousin, in whom I always delighted, and in whom bt not that I shall delight even to my latest hour. But icked coach-maker has sunk my spirits. What a miser- hing it is to depend, in any degree, for the accomplish- of a wish, and that wish so fervent, on the punctuality creature who I suppose was never punctual in his life! l him, my dear, in order to quicken him, that if he per- his promise, he shall make my coach when I want one, hat if he performs it not, I will most assuredly employ other man.

Throckmortons sent a note to invite us to dinner; wo

went, and a very agreeable day we had. They made no fuss with us, which I was heartily glad to see, for where I give trouble I am sure that I cannot be welcome. Themselves, and their chaplain, and we, were all the party. After dinner we had much cheerful and pleasant talk, the particulars of which might not perhaps be so entertaining upon paper, therefore all but one I will omit, and that I will mention only because it will of itself be sufficient to give you an insight into their opinion on a very important subject,—their own religion. I happened to say that in all professions and trades mankind affected an air of mystery. Physicians, I observed, in particular, were objects of that remark, who persist in prescribing in Latin, many times no doubt to the hazard of a patient's life, through the ignorance of an apothecary. Mr. Throckmorton assented to what I said, and turning to his chaplain, to my infinite surprise observed to him, "*That is just as absurd as our praying in Latin.*" I could have hugged him for his liberality, and freedom from bigotry, but thought it rather more decent to let the matter pass without any visible notice. I therefore heard it with pleasure, and kept my pleasure to myself. The two ladies in the mean time were tête-à-tête in the drawing-room. Their conversation turned principally (as I afterwards learned from Mrs. Unwin) on a most delightful topic, viz. myself. In the first place, Mrs. Throckmorton admired my book, from which she quoted by heart more than I could repeat, though I so lately wrote it.

In short, my dear, I cannot proceed to relate what she said of the book, and the book's author, for that abominable modesty that I cannot even yet get rid of. Let it suffice to say that you, who are disposed to love every body who speaks kindly of your cousin, will certainly love Mrs. Throckmorton, when you shall be told what she said of him; and that you *will* be told is equally certain, because it depends on Mrs. Unwin, who will tell you many a good long story for me, that I am not able to tell for myself. I am however not at all in arrear to our neighbours in the matter of admiration and esteem, but the more I know them, the more I like them, and have nearly an affection for them both. I am delighted that the Task has so large a share of the approbation of your *sensible* Suffolk friend.

I received yesterday from the General another letter of

T. S. An unknown auxiliary having started up in my behalf, I believe I shall leave the business of answering to him, having no leisure myself for controversy. He lies very open to a very effectual reply.

My dearest cousin, adieu! I hope to write to you but once more before we meet. But oh! this coachmaker, and oh! this holiday week!

Yours, with impatient desire to see you, W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Olney, June 9, 1786

THE little time that I can devote to any other purpose than that of poetry is as you may suppose stolen. Homer is urgent. Much is done, but much remains undone, and no school-boy is more attentive to the performance of his daily task than I am. You will therefore excuse me if at present I am both unfrequent and short.

The paper tells me that the Chancellor has relapsed, and I am truly sorry to hear it. The first attack was dangerous, but a second must be more formidable still. It is not probable that I should ever hear from him again if he survive; yet of the much that I should have felt for him, had our connexion never been interrupted, I still feel much. Every body will feel the loss of a man whose abilities have made him of such general importance.

I correspond again with Colman, and upon the most friendly footing, and find in his instance, and in some others, that an intimate intercourse, which has been only casually suspended, not forfeited on either side by outrage, is capable not only of revival, but improvement.

I had a letter some time since from your sister Fanny, that gave me great pleasure. Such notices from old friends are always pleasant, and of such pleasures I have received many lately. They refresh the remembrance of early days, and make me young again. The noble institution of the Nonsense Club will be forgotten, when we are gone who composed it; but I often think of your most heroic line, written at one of our meetings, and especially think of it when I am translating Homer,—

"To whom replied the Devil yard-long-tailed."

There never was any thing more truly Grecian than that.

triple epithet, and were it possible to introduce it into either Iliad or Odyssey, I should certainly steal it. I am now flushed with expectation of Lady Hesketh, who spends the summer with us. We hope to see her next week. We have found admirable lodgings both for her and her suite, and a Quaker in this town, still more admirable than they, who, as if he loved her as much as I do, furnishes them for her with real elegance. W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

June 12, 1786.

I AM neither young nor superannuated, yet am I child. When I had read your letter I grumbled: not at you, my dearest cousin, for you are in no fault, but at the whole generation of coach-makers, as you may suppose, and at yours in particular. I foresaw and foreknew that he would fail in his promise, and yet was disappointed; was, in truth, no more prepared for what I expected with so much reason, than if I had not at all expected it. I grumbled till we went to dinner, and at intervals till we had dined; and when dinner was over, with very little encouragement, I could actually have cried. And if I had, I should in truth have thought them tears as well bestowed as most that I have shed for many years. At first I numbered months, then weeks, then days, and was just beginning to number hours, and now I am thrown back to days again. My first speech was, after folding up your letter, (for I will honestly tell you all,) I am crazed with Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays and St. Alban's, and Totteridge, and Hadley. When is she to set out?—When is she to be here? Do tell me, for, perhaps, you understand it better than I. Why says Mrs. Unwin, (with much more composure in her air than properly belonged to her, for she also had her feelings on the occasion,) she sets out to-morrow se'nnight, and will be here on the Wednesday after. And who knows that? replied I; will the coach-maker be at all more punctual in repairing the old carriage, than in making the new one? For my part, I have no hope of seeing her this month; and if it be possible, I will not think of it, lest I should be again disappointed. And to say the truth, my dear, though hours have passed since thus I said, and I have had time for cooler consideration, the suspicion still sticks close to me, that more delays may happen.

A philosopher would prepare himself for such an event, but I am no philosopher, at least when the comfort of seeing you is in question. I believe in my heart that there have been just as many true philosophers upon earth, as there have been men that have had little or no feeling, and not one more. Swift truly says—

> Indifference clad in reason's guise,
> All want of fortitude supplies.

When I wake in the night, I feel my spirits the lighter because you are coming. When I am not at Troy, I am either occupied in the recollection of a thousand passages of my past life, in which you were a partaker with me, or conversing about you with Mrs. Unwin. Thus my days and nights have been spent principally ever since you determined upon this journey, and especially, and almost without interruption from any other subject, since the time of your journey has seemed near at hand. While I despaired, as I did for many years, that I should ever see you more, I thought of you, indeed, and often, but with less solicitude. I used to say to myself; Providence has so ordered it, and it is my duty to submit. He has cast me at a distance from her, and from all whom I once knew. He did it, and not I; it is He who has chosen my situation for me. Have I not reason to be thankful that, since he designed me to pass a part of my life, and no inconsiderable one neither, in a state of the deepest melancholy, he appointed me a friend in Mrs. Unwin, who should share all my sorrows with me, and watch over me in my helpless condition, night and day? What, and where had I been without her? Such considerations were sufficient to reconcile me at that time to perpetual separation even from you, because perpetual I supposed it must be, and without remedy. But now every hour of your absence seems long, for this very natural reason, because the same Providence has given me a hope that you will be present with me soon. A good that seems at an immeasurable distance, and that we cannot hope to reach, has therefore the less influence on our affections. But the same good brought nearer, made to appear practicable, promised to our hopes, and almost in possession, engages all our faculties and desires. All this is according to the natural and necessary course of things in the human heart; and the

philosophy that would interfere with it, is folly at least, if not frenzy. A throne has at present but little sensible attraction for me. And why? Perhaps only because I know that should I break my heart with wishes for a throne, I should never reach one. But did I know assuredly that I should put on a crown to-morrow, perhaps I too should feel ambition, and account the interposing night tedious. The sum of the whole matter, my dear, is this: that this villanous coach-maker has mortified me monstrously, and that I tremble lest he should do so again. From you I have no fears. I see in your letter and all the way through it, what pains you take to assure me and give me comfort. I am and will be comforted for this very reason; and will wait still other ten days with all the patience that I can muster. You, I know, will be punctual: you can, and that at least is matter of real consolation.

I approve altogether, my cousin beloved, of your sending your goods to the waggon on Saturday, and cookee by the coach on Tuesday. She will be here perhaps by four in the afternoon, at the latest by five, and will have quite time enough to find out all the cupboards and shelves in her department before you arrive. But I declare and protest that cookee shall sleep that night at our house, and get her breakfast here next morning. You will break her heart, child, if you send her into a strange house where she will find nothing that has life but the curate, who has not much neither. Servant he keeps none. A woman makes his bed, and after a fashion as they say, dresses his dinner, and then leaves him to his lucubrations. I do therefore insist on it, and so does Mrs. Unwin, that cookee shall be our guest for that time; and from this we will not depart. I tell thee besides, that I shall be more glad to see her, than ever I was in my life to see one whom I never saw before. Guess why, if you can.

You must number your miles fifty-six instead of fifty-four. The fifty-sixth mile ends but a few yards beyond the vicarage. Soon after you shall have entered Olney, you will find an opening on your right hand. It is a lane that leads to your dwelling. There your coach may stop and set down Mrs. Eaton: when she has walked about forty yards she will spy a green gate and rails on her left hand; and when she has opened the gate and reached the house-door, she will find herself at home. But we have another manœuvre to play off upon you, and it

which we positively will not be opposed, or if we are, it shall be to no purpose. I have an honest fellow that works in my garden, his name is Kitchener, and we call him Kitch for brevity. He is sober, and as trusty as the day. He has a smart blue coat, that when I had worn it some years, I gave him, and he has now worn it some years himself. I shall set him on horseback, and order him to the Swan at Newport, there to wait your arrival, and if you should not stop at that place, as perhaps you may not, immediately to throw himself into your suite, and to officiate as your guide. For though the way from Newport hither is short, there are turnings that might puzzle your coachman; and he will be of use too, in conducting you to our house, which otherwise you might not easily find, partly through the stupidity of those of whom you might inquire, and partly from its out-of-the-way situation. My brother drove up and down Olney in quest of us, almost as often as you up and down Chancery Lane in quest of the Madans, with fifty boys and girls at his tail, before he could find us. The first man, therefore, you shall see in a blue coat with white buttons, in the famous town of Newport, cry Kitch! He will immediately answer, My Lady! and from that moment you are sure not to be lost.

Your house shall be as clean as scrubbing and dry-rubbing can make it, and in all respects fit to receive you. My friend the Quaker, in all that I have seen of his doings, has acquitted himself much to my satisfaction. Some little things, he says, will perhaps be missing at first, in such a multiplicity, but they shall be produced as soon as called for. Mrs. U. has bought you six ducks, and is fatting them for you. She has also rummaged up a coop that will hold six chickens, and designs to people it for you by the first opportunity; for these things are not to be got fit for the table at Olney. Thus, my dear, are all things in the best train possible, and nothing remains but that you come and show yourself. Oh, that moment! Shall we not both enjoy it?—That we shall.

I have received an anonymous complimentary Pindaric Ode from a little poet who calls himself a school-boy. I send you the first stanza by way of specimen. You shall see it all soon.

TO WM. COWPER, OF THE INNER TEMPLE, ESQ.

ON HIS POEMS IN THE SECOND VOLUME.

In what high strains, my Muse, wilt thou
Attempt great Cowper's worth to show?
Pindaric strains that tune the lyre,
And 'twould require
A Pindar's fire
To sing great Cowper's worth,
The lofty bard, delightful sage,
Ever the wonder of the age,
And *blessing to the earth*.

Adieu, my precious cousin, your lofty bard and delightful sage expects you with all possible affection.

Ever yours, WM. COWPER.

I am truly sorry for your poor friend Burrows!

Our dinner hour is four o'clock. We will not surfeit you with delicacies; of that be assured. I know your palate, and am glad to know that it is easily pleased. Were it other than it is, it would stand but a poor chance to be gratified at Olney. I undertake for lettuce and cucumber, and Mrs. U. for all the rest. If she feeds you too well, you must humble her.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Olney, June 19, 1785.

My dear cousin's arrival has, as it could not fail to do, made us happier than we ever were at Olney. Her great kindness in giving us her company is a cordial that I shall feel the effect of, not only while she is here, but while I live.

Olney will not be much longer the place of our habitation. At a village two miles distant we have hired a house of Mr. Throckmorton, a much better than we occupy at present, and yet not more expensive. It is situated very near to our most agreeable landlord, and his agreeable pleasure grounds. In him, and in his wife, we shall find such companions as will always make the time pass pleasantly while they are in the country, and his grounds will afford us good air, and good walking room in the winter; two advantages which we have not enjoyed at Olney, where I have no neighbour with whom I can converse, and where, seven months in the year, I have been imprisoned by dirty and impassable ways, till both my health and Mrs. Unwin's have suffered materially.

Homer is ever importunate, and will not suffer me to spend half the time with my distant friends that I would gladly give them. W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, Olney, July 3, 1786.

AFTER a long silence I begin again. A day given to my friends, is a day taken from Homer, but to such an interruption now and then occurring, I have no objection. Lady Hesketh is, as you observe, arrived, and has been with us near a fortnight. She pleases every body, and is pleased in her turn with every thing she finds at Olney; is always cheerful and sweet-tempered, and knows no pleasure equal to that of communicating pleasure to us, and to all around her. This disposition in her is the more comfortable, because it is not the humour of the day, a sudden flash of benevolence and good spirits, occasioned merely by a change of scene; but it is her natural turn, and has governed all her conduct ever since I knew her first. We are consequently happy in her society, and shall be happier still to have you to partake with us in our joy. I can now assure you that her complexion is not at all indebted to art, having seen a hundred times the most convincing proof of its authenticity, her colour fading, and glowing again alternately as the weather, or her own temperature has happened to affect it, while she has been sitting before me. I am fond of the sound of bells, but was never more pleased with those of Olney than when they rang her into her new habitation. It is a compliment that our performers upon those instruments have never paid to any other personage (Lord Dartmouth excepted) since we knew the town. In short, she is, as she ever was, my pride and my joy, and I am delighted with every thing that means to do her honour. Her first appearance was too much for me; my spirits, instead of being greatly raised, as I had inadvertently supposed they would be, broke down with me under the pressure of too much joy, and left me flat, or rather melancholy throughout the day, to a degree that was mortifying to myself, and alarming to her. But I have made amends for this failure since, and in point of cheerfulness have far exceeded her expectations, for she knew that sable had been my suit for my years.

And now I shall communicate intelligence that will give you

pleasure. When you first contemplated the front of our abode, you were shocked. In your eyes it had the appearance of a prison, and you sighed at the thought that your mother dwelt in it. Your view of it was not only just, but prophetic. It had not only the aspect of a place built for the purpose of incarceration, but has actually served that purpose through a long, long period, and we have been the prisoners. But a gaol-delivery is at hand. The bolts and bars are to be loosed, and we shall escape. A very different mansion, both in point of appearance and accommodation, expects us, and the expense of living in it not greater than we are subjected to in this. It is situated at Weston, one of the prettiest villages in England, and belongs to Mr. Throckmorton. We all three dine with him to-day by invitation, and shall survey it in the afternoon, point out the necessary repairs, and finally adjust the treaty. I have my cousin's promise that she will never let another year pass without a visit to us; and the house is large enough to contain us, and our suite, and her also, with as many of hers as she shall choose to bring. The change will I hope prove advantageous both to your mother and me in all respects. Here we have no neighbourhood, there we shall have most agreeable neighbours in the Throckmortons. Here we have a bad air in winter, impregnated with the fishy smelling fumes of the marsh miasma; there we shall breathe in an atmosphere untainted. Here we are confined from September to March, and sometimes longer; there we shall be upon the very verge of pleasure-grounds in which we can always ramble, and shall not wade through almost impassable dirt to get at them. Both your mother's constitution and mine have suffered materially by such close and long confinement, and it is high time, unless we intend to retreat into the grave, that we should seek out a more wholesome residence. A pretty deal of new furniture will be wanted, especially chairs and beds, all which my kind cousin will provide, and fit up a parlour and a chamber for herself into the bargain. So far is well, the rest is left to Heaven.

I have hardly left myself room for an answer to your queries concerning my friend John, and his studies. What the supplement of Hirtius is made of, I know not, We did not read it at Westminster. I should imagine it might be dispensed *with.* I should recommend the civil war of Cæsar, because he

wrote it, who ranks I believe as the best writer, as well as soldier, of his day. There are books (I know not what they are, but you do, and can easily find them) that will inform him clearly of both the civil and military management of the Romans, the several officers, I mean, in both departments; and what was the peculiar province of each. The study of some such book would I should think prove a good introduction to that of Livy, unless you have a Livy with notes to that effect. A want of intelligence in those points has heretofore made the Roman history very dark and difficult to me; therefore I thus advise.

Our love is with all your lovelies, both great and small.

Yours ever, W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Olney, July 4, 1786.

I REJOICE, my dear friend, that you have at last received my proposals, and most cordially thank you for all your labours in my service. I have friends in the world who, knowing that I am apt to be careless when left to myself, are determined to watch over me with a jealous eye upon this occasion. The consequence will be, that the work will be better executed, but more tardy in the production. To them I owe it, that my translation, as fast as it proceeds, passes under a revisal of the most accurate discerner of all blemishes. I know not whether I told you before, or now tell you for the first time, that I am in the hands of a very extraordinary person. He is intimate with my bookseller, and voluntarily offered his service. I was at first doubtful, whether to accept it or not; but finding that my friends abovesaid were not to be satisfied on any other terms, though myself a perfect stranger to the man and his qualifications, except as he was recommended by Johnson, I at length consented, and have since found great reason to rejoice that I did. I called him an extraordinary person, and such he is; for he is not only versed in Homer, and accurate in his knowledge of the Greek to a degree that entitles him to that appellation, but, though a foreigner, is a perfect master of our language, and has exquisite taste in English poetry. By his assistance I have improved many passages, supplied many oversights, and corrected many mistakes, such as will of course escape the most diligent and attentive labourer in such a work.

I ought to add, because it affords the best assurance of his zeal and fidelity, that he does not toil for hire, nor will accept of any premium, but has entered on this business merely for his amusement. In the last instance my sheets will pass through the hands of our old schoolfellow Colman, who has engaged to correct the press, and make any little alterations that he may see expedient. With all this precaution, little as I intended it once, I am now well satisfied. Experience has convinced me that other eyes than my own are necessary, in order that so long and arduous a task may be finished as it ought, and may neither discredit me, nor mortify and disappoint my friends. You, who I know interest yourself much and deeply in my success, will I dare say be satisfied with it too. Pope had many aids, and he who follows Pope ought not to walk alone.

Though I announce myself by my very undertaking to be one of Homer's most enraptured admirers, I am not a blind one. Perhaps the speech of Achilles given in my specimen is, as you hint, rather too much in the moralizing strain, to suit so young a man, and of so much fire. But whether it be or not, in the course of the close application that I am forced to give to my author, I discover inadvertencies not a few; some perhaps that have escaped even the commentators themselves; or perhaps, in the enthusiasm of their idolatry, they resolved that they should pass for beauties. Homer however, say what they will, was man, and in all the works of man, especially in a work of such length and variety, many things will of necessity occur, that might have been better. Pope and Addison had a Dennis; and Dennis, if I mistake not, held up as he has been to scorn and detestation, was a sensible fellow, and passed some censures upon both those writers that, had they been less just, would have hurt them less. Homer had his Zoilus; and perhaps if we knew all that Zoilus said, we should be forced to acknowledge that sometimes at least he had reason on his side. But it is dangerous to find any fault at all with what the world is determined to esteem faultless.

I rejoice, my dear friend, that you enjoy some composure, and cheerfulness of spirits: may God preserve and increase to you so great a blessing!

I am affectionately and truly yours, W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, July, 1786.

I AM not glad that I am obliged to apologize for an interval of three weeks that have elapsed since the receipt of yours; but not having it in my power to write oftener than I do, I am glad that my reason is such a one as you admit. In truth, my time is very much occupied; and the more because I not only have a long and laborious work in hand, for such it would prove at any rate, but because I make it a point to bestow my utmost attention upon it, and to give it all the finishing that the most scrupulous accuracy can command. As soon as breakfast is over, I retire to my nutshell of a summer-house, which is my verse-manufactory, and here I abide seldom less than three hours, and not often more. In the afternoon I return to it again; and all the day-light that follows, except what is devoted to a walk, is given to Homer. It is well for me, that a course which is now become necessary is so much my choice. The regularity of it, indeed, has been in the course of this last week a little interrupted, by the arrival of my dear cousin Lady Hesketh; but with the new week I shall, as they say, turn over a new leaf, and put myself under the same rigorous discipline as before. Something, and not a little, is due to the feelings that the sight of the kindest relation that ever man was blessed with must needs give birth to, after so long a separation. But she, whose anxiety for my success is, I believe, greater than my own, will take care that I shall not play truant and neglect my proper business. It was an observation of a sensible man whom I knew well in ancient days, (I mean when I was very young,) that people are never in reality happy when they boast much of being so. I feel myself accordingly well content to say, without any enlargement on the subject, that an enquirer after happiness might travel far, and not find a happier trio, than meet every day, either in our parlour, or in the parlour at the vicarage. I will not say that mine is not occasionally somewhat dashed with the sable hue of those notions, concerning myself and my situation, that have occupied, or rather possessed me so long: but on the other hand, I can also affirm, that my cousin's affectionate behaviour to us both, the sweetness of her temper, and the sprightliness of her conversation, relieve me in no small degree from the presence of them.

Mrs. Unwin bids me say how much she thanks you for your letter, which she will not fail to answer by the first opportunity. That she is not able to find one just now will not seem strange to you, when you shall consider for a moment how much she must necessarily have been, and must still be, engaged on this occasion; the whole concern of providing for the comfortable accommodation of our new neighbour having fallen upon her. She is greatly pleased with your Sermons, and has told me so repeatedly; and the pleasure that they have given her awaits me also in due time, as I am well and confidently assured: both because the subject of them is the greatest and the most interesting that can fall under the pen of any writer, and because no writer can be better qualified to discuss it judiciously and feelingly than yourself. The third set with which you favoured us, we destine to Lady Hesketh; and in so disposing of them, are inclined to believe that we shall not err far from the mark at which you yourself directed them.

Mrs. Perry, who drank tea with us the day when her brother's child was buried at Olney, desired to be remembered to you and to Mrs. Newton, when I should write, with much affection. She seems as perfectly happy in her new situation, as, in a world that will not admit of happiness absolutely perfect, it is possible to be. We were truly sorry to learn on that same day from Phœbe Warner, the accident that Mrs. Newton had met with just before, and interest ourselves particularly on that account in the arrival of your next letter, which we hope will bring us an account of her being entirely cured of the painful consequences of it.

Tommy Bull has been very ill of a fever, and his father, consequently, has been very much distressed: but we had a glimpse of him last Tuesday, when he told us that his boy was better.

Our affectionate remembrances attend yourself and Mrs. Newton, to which you acquired an everlasting right while you dwelt under the roof where we dined yesterday. It is impossible that we should set our foot over the threshold of the vicarage, without recollecting all your kindness.

Yours, my dear friend, W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Aug. 5, 1786.

I AM neither idle nor forgetful; on the contrary I think of you

often, and my thoughts would more frequently find their way to my pen, were I not of necessity every day occupied in Homer. This long business engrosses all my mornings, and when the days grow shorter will have all my evenings too; at present they are devoted to walking, an exercise to me as necessary as my food.

You have heard of our intended removal. The house that is to receive us is in a state of preparation, and, when finished, will be both smarter and more commodious than our present abode. But the circumstance that recommends it chiefly is its situation. Long confinement in the winter, and indeed for the most part in the autumn too, has hurt us both. A gravel walk, thirty yards long, affords but indifferent scope to the locomotive faculty: yet it is all that we have had to move in for eight months in the year, during thirteen years that I have been a prisoner. Had I been confined in the Tower, the battlements of it would have furnished me with a larger space. You say well, that there was a time when I was happy at Olney; and I am now as happy at Olney as I expect to be any where without the presence of God. Change of situation is with me no otherwise an object than as both Mrs. Unwin's health and mine may happen to be concerned in it. A fever of the slow and spirit-oppressing kind seems to belong to all, except the natives, who have dwelt in Olney many years; and the natives have pu-trid fevers. Both they and we, I believe, are immediately indebted for our respective maladies to an atmosphere encumbered with raw vapours issuing from flooded meadows; and we in particular, perhaps, have fared the worse, for sitting so often, and sometimes for months, over a cellar filled with water. These ills we shall escape in the uplands; and as we may reasonably hope, of course, their consequences. But as for happiness, he that has once had communion with his Maker must be more frantic than ever I was yet, if he can dream of finding it at a distance from Him. I no more expect happiness at Weston than here, or than I should expect it, in company with felons and outlaws, in the hold of a ballast-lighter. Animal spirits, however, have their value, and are especially desirable to him who is condemned to carry a burthen, which at any rate will tire him, but which, without their aid, cannot fail to crush him, the dealings of God with me are to myself utterly unintelligible. I have never met, either in books or in conversation,

with an experience at all similar to my own. More than a twelvemonth has passed since I began to hope that, having walked the whole breadth of the bottom of this Red Sea, I was beginning to climb the opposite shore, and I prepared to sing the song of Moses. But I have been disappointed: those hopes have been blasted; those comforts have been wrested from me. I could not be so duped, even by the arch-enemy himself, as to be made to question the divine nature of them; but I have been made to believe, (which, you will say, is being duped still more,) that God gave them to me in derision, and took them away in vengeance. Such, however, is, and has been my persuasion many a long day; and when I shall think on that subject more comfortably, or, as you will be inclined to tell me, more rationally and scripturally, I know not. In the mean time, I embrace with alacrity every alleviation of my case, and with the more alacrity, because, whatsoever proves a relief of my distress, is a cordial to Mrs. Unwin, whose sympathy with me, through the whole of it has been such, that, despair excepted, her burthen has been as heavy as mine. Lady Hesketh, by her affectionate behaviour, the cheerfulness of her conversation, and the constant sweetness of her temper, has cheered us both; and Mrs. Unwin not less than me. By her help we get change of air and of scene, though still resident at Olney; and by her means, have intercourse with some families in this country, with whom, but for her, we could never have been acquainted. Her presence here, would, at any time, even in my happiest days, have been a comfort to me; but, in the present day, I am doubly sensible of its value. She leaves nothing unsaid, nothing undone, that she thinks will be conducive to our well-being; and, so far as she is concerned, I have nothing to wish, but that I could believe her sent hither in mercy to myself,—then I should be thankful.

I understand that Mr. Bull is in town. If you should see him and happen to remember it, be so good as to tell him that we called at his door yesterday evening. All were well, but Mrs. B. and Mr. Greatheed were both abroad.

I am, my dear friend, with Mrs. Unwin's love to Mrs. N. and yourself, hers and yours, as ever, W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, Aug. 9, 1786.

I SCRATCH a very few lines, just to prevent your saying—Well, I think the poet might contrive to afford a few minutes, notwithstanding his Homerican occupation.

I hope that you have by this time completely recovered from the indisposition occasioned by your journey. The day after your departure, Lady Hesketh said, Now we want Mr. Unwin. Her reason, at least one of her reasons, for saying so was that we had spent near half an hour together without laughing:—an interval of gravity that does not often occur where you are present.

She has not yet heard from Mr. Hornby. If a letter should arrive by this day's post, I will insert notice of it before I close mine. We infer from his silence that he had not previously engaged himself before the receipt of hers. He has, I suppose, like most men of large fortune, who see much company, a *cacoethes* not of *scribendi* but of *non scribendi*.

Sir Robert Throckmorton is not dead—on the contrary, alive and likely to live the longer for having had an eresypylatose eruption. That word is so seldom in my use that I will not swear I have spelt it right. If you should be equally uncertain, consult the apothecary. Mr. Throckmorton gave me yesterday a morning call, and was very chatty and agreeable. To-day we dine there. He performs for us at Weston with the liberality of a gentlemen landlord, and spares no expense to make our future residence both smart and commodious. My cousin is for her part, lavish of all manner of good things, and sets no bounds to her kindness, so you are likely to see us next year, at all points well accommodated. You will hear from her, by the way, as soon as she hears from Mr. Hornby.

I have had a most obliging letter from Mr. Smith at Clifton, giving me an account of his recovery that afforded me, as you will believe, true pleasure, enquiring when I shall send Homer to press, and assuring me that the notice of it had raised more expectation of it in the world than he could have supposed it possible a mere notice should; and including withal a twenty pound bill for his children,—the poor.

Adieu, my dear William, Pandarus and Diomede are on fire to combat, breakfast is ready, and the moment I have swallowed it, I must commit them in terrible conflict.

Your mother's warmest love and mind attend you and yours,
My sweet cousin sends her affectionate compliments.
Ever yours, WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND, August 24, 1786.

I CATCH a minute by the tail and hold it fast, while I write to you. The moment it is fled I must go to breakfast. The post that brought me your speculations on the subject of your future pupil, conveyed to you I suppose Lady Hesketh's letter on the same subject, which has no doubt given you satisfaction. I saw Mr. Hornby's letter, than which nothing could be more handsome. His sole remark on the matter of stipend is this,—that in placing the young gentleman under the influence of such excellent tuition, he confers on him a greater advantage than he could secure to him by any other means. You see, therefore, that he is a wise man, knows how to value the opportunity, and that erudition, &c. are better than house and land; for that

When house and land are gone and spent,
Then larning is most excellent.

I wish you all possible success with him, and that the Muses nine, with Apollo at their head, may brighten his intellects, and make him readily susceptible of all that you shall endeavour to infuse.

I am still occupied in refining and polishing, and shall this morning give the finishing hand to the seventh book. Fuseli does me the honour to say that the most difficult, and most interesting parts of the poem, are admirably rendered. But because he did not express himself equally pleased with the more pedestrian parts of it, my labour therefore has been principally given to the dignification of them; not but that I have retouched considerably, and made better still the best. In short I hope to make it all of a piece, and shall exert myself to the utmost to secure that desirable point. A storyteller, so very circumstantial as Homer, must of necessity present us often with much matter in itself capable of no other embellishment than purity of diction and harmony of versification can give to it. *Hic labor, hoc opus est.* For our language, unless it be very severely chastised, has not the terseness, nor our

measure the music of the Greek. But I shall not fail through want of industry.

We are likely to be very happy in our connexion with the Throckmortons. His reserve and mine wear off, and he talks with great pleasure of the comfort that he proposes to himself from our winter-evening conversations. His purpose seems to be, that we should spend them alternately with each other. Lady Hesketh transcribes for me at present. When she is gone, Mrs. Throckmorton takes up that business, and will be my lady of the ink-bottle for the rest of the winter. She solicited herself that office.

I will subjoin the measure of my hat. Let the new one be furnished *à la mode*.

Believe me, My dear William, truly yours, W. C.

Mr. Throckmorton will, I doubt not, procure Lord Petre's name, if he can, without any hint from me. He could not interest himself more in my success than he seems to do. Could he get the Pope to subscribe, I should have him; and should be glad of him and the whole conclave.

The outside circumference of the hat crown is two feet one inch and an eighth.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You are my mahogany box, with a slip in the lid of it, to which I commit my productions of the lyric kind, in perfect confidence that they are safe and will go no farther. All who are attached to the jingling art have this peculiarity, that they would find no pleasure in the exercise, had they not one friend at least to whom they might publish what they have composed. If you approve my Latin, and your wife and sister my English, this, together with the approbation of your mother, is fame enough for me.

He who cannot look forward with comfort, must find what comfort he can in looking backward. Upon this principle, I the other day sent my imagination upon a trip thirty years behind me. She was very obedient, and very swift of foot, presently performed her journey, and at last set me down in the sixth form at Westminster. I fancied myself once more a schoolboy, a period of life in which, if I had never tasted true happiness, I was at least equally unacquainted with its con-

trary. No manufacturer of waking dreams ever succeeded better in his employment than I do. I can weave such a piece of tapestry in a few minutes, as not only has all the charms of reality, but is embellished also with a variety of beauties which, though they never existed, are more captivating than any that ever did; accordingly I was a schoolboy in high favour with my master, received a silver groat for my exercise, and had the pleasure of seeing it sent from form to form, for the admiration of all who were able to understand it. Do you wish to see this highly applauded performance? It follows on the other side.

[Torn off.]

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

You are sometimes indebted to bad weather, but more frequently to a dejected state of mind, for my punctuality as a correspondent. This was the case when I composed that tragicomical ditty for which you thank me: my spirits were exceedingly low, and having no fool or jester at hand, I resolved to be my own. The end was answered; I laughed myself, and I made you laugh. Sometimes I pour out my thoughts in a mournful strain; but these sable effusions your mother will not suffer me to send you, being resolved that nobody shall share with me the burthen of my melancholy but herself. In general you may suppose that I am remarkably sad when I seem remarkably merry. The effort we make to get rid of a load is usually violent in proportion to the weight of it. I have seen at Sadler's Wells a tight little fellow dancing with a fat man upon his shoulders; to those who looked at him, he seemed insensible of the encumbrance; but if a physician had felt his pulse, when the feat was over, I suppose he would have found the effect of it there. Perhaps you remember the Undertakers' dance in the Rehearsal, which they perform in crape hat-bands and black cloaks, to the tune of "Hob or Nob," one of the sprightliest airs in the world. Such is my fiddling, and such is my dancing; but they serve a purpose which at some certain times could not be so effectually promoted by any thing else.

I am informed that Thelyphthora is at last encountered by a writer of abilities equal to the task. An answer to that base-

born book was a grand desideratum in the world of literature. I call it so because it is the spurious issue of Scripture violated by misinterpretation. The mother is ashamed of the brat, and disowns it in every page; but the father, (a father is sometimes proud of his bastard,) dandles it upon his knee, and holds it up to the admiration of all beholders. This champion for the rights and honours of single marriage comes forth in the Monthly Review: I have not yet seen the first specimen of his performance, which belongs to October, but have ordered it down from London. The character I have received of it has pleased me much, and if I find it answer upon the perusal, I shall connect the detached parts of it, (for it is to be a work of some continuance,) and bind them up together. It is high time this false light should be extinguished: it has alarmed many families, misled many readers, and confirmed not a few in practices which their own consciences condemned, till that Siren song deceived them.—You will think perhaps I talk big for one that has never read it: but I am acquainted with the principal hinges on which the whole depends, and am persuaded that one flash of truth would melt them. Mr. Riland of Birmingham sent into this country a string of twenty-seven printed queries, unanswerable he thinks, unless in such a way as must unavoidably induce a necessity of adopting Mr. Madan's plan. But being persuaded that even I was a match for such an enemy, I ventured upon the formidable task, and gave them twenty-seven answers. Indeed a child might have done the same, and I wonder less at the author's predilection in favour of his own conceptions, (which is a partiality natural enough,) than that he has found, and among ministers too, understanding so scantily enlightened, or so easily perverted.

I mourn with you over the tender conscience of your collector, whose peace of mind is so inconsistent with your interest, that he cannot think he does his duty unless he wrongs you. You think the man's meaning is good! you have a world of charity; what is it to him from whose purse the tax is taken? It is his business to gather it; when that is done, he has discharged his office. You are not quite so much like Falstaff, as he is like Mr. Dombledon, of whom Falstaff would have borrowed money, and when he refused to lend him any, the knight called him a rascally worsted stocking, yea, forsooth, knave. A tender conscience is always entitled to re-

spect, but a scrupulous one deserves suspicion. The man may be very honest for aught I know; but I am sure you are so; and he ought to know that a man of your principles would not endeavour to force him upon a conduct incompatible with his oath.

I have endeavoured to comply with your request, though I am not good at writing upon a given subject. Your mother, however, comforts me by her approbation, and I steer myself in all that I produce by her judgement. If she does not understand me at the first reading, I am sure the lines are obscure, and always alter them; if she laughs, I know it is not without reason; and if she says, "that's well, it will do"—I have no fear lest any body else should find fault with it. She is my lord chamberlain, who licenses all I write.

TO MISS C——, ON HER BIRTH-DAY.

How many between east and west,
Disgrace their parent earth,
Whose days constrain us to detest,
The day that gave them birth;

Not so when Stella's natal morn,
Revolving months restore,
We can rejoice that she was born,
And wish her born once more!

If you like it, use it: if not, you know the remedy. It is serious, yet epigrammatic,—like a bishop at a ball!

W. C.

P.S. I have read the Review; it is learned and wise,
Clean, candid, and witty.—Thelyphthora dies.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I AM sensibly mortified at finding myself obliged to disappoint you; but though I have had many thoughts upon the subject you propose to my consideration, I have had none that have been favourable to the undertaking. I applaud your purpose, for the sake of the principle from which it springs; but I look upon the evils you mean to animadvert upon, as too obstinate and inveterate ever to be expelled by the means you mention. The very persons to whom you would address your remonstrance, are themselves sufficiently aware of their enormity: years ago, to my knowledge, they were frequently the topics of conversation at polite tables; they have been frequently

mentioned in both houses of parliament; and I suppose there is hardly a member of either that would not immediately assent to the necessity of reformation, were it proposed to him in a reasonable way. But there it stops; and there it will for ever stop, till the majority are animated with a zeal in which they are at present deplorably defective. A religious man is unfeignedly shocked, when he reflects upon the prevalence of such crimes; a moral man must needs be so in a degree, and will affect to be much more so than he is. But how many do you suppose there are among our worthy representatives that come under either of these descriptions? If all were such, yet to new model the police of the country, which must be done in order to make even unavoidable perjury less frequent, were a task they would hardly undertake, on account of the great difficulty that would attend it. Government is too much interested in the consumption of malt-liquor to reduce the number of venders. Such plausible pleas may be offered in defence of travelling on Sundays, especially by the trading part of the world, as the whole bench of bishops would find it difficult to overrule. And with respect to the violation of oaths, till a certain name is more generally respected than it is at present, however such persons as yourself may be grieved at it, the legislature are never likely to lay it to heart. I do not mean, nor would by any means attempt to discourage you in so laudable an enterprise; but such is the light in which it appears to me, that I do not feel the least spark of courage qualifying or prompting me to embark in it myself. An exhortation therefore written by me,—by hopeless desponding me,—would be flat, insipid, and uninteresting; and disgrace the cause, instead of serving it. If after what I have said, however, you still retain the same sentiments, *Macte esto virtute tuâ;* there is nobody better qualified than yourself, and may your success prove that I despaired of it without a reason.

Adieu, my dear friend, W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND.

I WRITE under the impression of a difficulty not easily surmounted, the want of something to say. Letter-spinning is generally more entertaining to the writer than the reader: for your sake therefore, I would avoid it, but a dearth of materials

is very apt to betray one into a trifling strain, in spite of all one's endeavours to be serious.

What have you done with your perverse parishioner? Perhaps when he has put a lock upon his pew, he may shut himself up in it oftener than he used to do: you remember a certain story about the boy and his trunk. The consciousness that the seat is become his own so emphatically that he can exclude every body else, may make him fond of it. I believe many a man that keeps a carriage, rides in it because he keeps one, though sometimes he would otherwise prefer a walk.

I lay by my paper for the present;—I really can go on no further.

I left off on Saturday, this present being Monday morning, and I renew the attempt, in hopes that I may possibly catch some subject by the end, and be more successful.

So have I seen the maids in vain
Tumble and tease a tangled skein:
They bite the lip, they scratch the head,
And cry—"The deuce is in the thread!"
They torture it, and jerk it round,
Till the right end at last is found;
Then wind, and wind, and wind away,
And what was work is changed to play.

When I wrote the two first lines, I thought I had engaged in a hazardous enterprise; for, thought I, should my poetical vein be as dry as my prosaic, I shall spoil the sheet, and send nothing at all; for I could on no account endure the thought of beginning again. But I think I have succeeded to admiration, and am willing to flatter myself that I have seen even a worse impromptu in the newspapers.

Though we live in a nook, and the world is quite unconscious that there are any such beings in it as ourselves, yet we are not unconcerned about what passes in it. The present awful crisis, big with the fate of England, engages much of our attention. The action is probably over by this time, and though we know it not, the grand question is decided, whether the war shall roar in our own once peaceful fields, or whether we shall still only hear of it at a distance. I can compare the nation to no similitude more apt than that of an ancient castle *that had* been for days assaulted by the battering ram. It was *long before* the stroke of that engine made any sensible im-

ion; but the continual repetition at length communi-
. a slight tremor to the wall; the next, and the next, and
next blow increased it. Another shock puts the whole
in motion, from the top to the foundation: it bends for-
, and is every moment driven farther from the pependi-
; till at last the decisive blow is given, and down it
s. Every million that has been raised within the last
ry, has had an effect upon the constitution like that of a
from the aforesaid ram upon the aforesaid wall. The im-
becomes more and more important, and the impression
akes is continually augmented; unless, therefore, some-
; extraordinary intervenes to prevent it, you will find the
equence at the end of my simile.

Yours, W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

promised you verse, if you would send me a frank, I
not willing to return the cover without some, though I
: I have already wearied you by the prolixity of my
.[1]

must refer you to those unaccountable gaddings and
ces of the human mind, for the cause of this production;
n general I believe there is no man who has less to do
the ladies' cheeks than I have. I suppose it would be
to antedate it, and to imagine that it was written twenty
ago, for my mind was never more in a trifling butterfly
than when I composed it, even in the earliest parts of my
And what is worse than all this, I have translated it
Latin:—but that some other time.

Yours, W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

DEAR WILLIAM,

apt we are to deceive ourselves where self is in question!
say I am in your debt, and I accounted you in mine; a
ke to which you must attribute my arrears, if indeed I
you any, for I am not backward to write where the upper-
thought is welcome.

am obliged to you for all the books you have occasionally
shed me with: I did not indeed read many of Johnson's
ics; those of established reputation are so fresh in my

[1] *Here followed* his poem, the Lily and the Rose.

memory, though many years have intervened since I made them my companions, that it was like reading what I read yesterday over again: and as to the minor Classics, I did not think them worth reading at all; I tasted most of them, and did not like them. It is a great thing to be indeed a poet, and does not happen to more than one man in a century. Churchill, the great Churchill, deserved the name of poet: I have read him twice, and some of his pieces three times over, and the last time with more pleasure than the first. The pitiful scribbler of his life seems to have undertaken that task, for which he was entirely unqualified, merely because it afforded him an opportunity to traduce him. He has inserted in it but one anecdote of consequence, for which he refers you to a novel, and introduces the story with doubts about the truth of it. But his barrenness as a biographer I could forgive, if the simpleton had not thought himself a judge of his writings, and under the erroneous influence of that thought, informed his reader that Gotham, Independence, and the Times were catch-pennies. Gotham, unless I am a greater blockhead than he, which I am far from believing, is a noble and beautiful poem, and a poem, with which I make no doubt the author took as much pains as with any he ever wrote. Making allowance, (and Dryden in his Absalom and Achitophel stands in need of the same indulgence,) for an unwarrantable use of Scripture, it appears to me to be a masterly performance. Independence is a most animated piece, full of strength and spirit, and marked with that bold masculine character which, I think, is the great peculiarity of this writer. And the Times, (except that the subject is disgusting to the last degree,) stands equally high in my opinion. He is indeed a careless writer for the most part; but where shall we find in any of those authors who finish their works with the exactness of a Flemish pencil, those bold and daring strokes of fancy, those numbers so hazardously ventured upon and so happily finished, the matter so compressed and yet so clear, and the colouring so sparingly laid on, and yet with such a beautiful effect? In short, it is not his least praise that he is never guilty of those faults as a writer, which he lays to the charge of others. A proof that he did not judge by a borrowed standard, or from rules laid down by critics, but that he was qualified to do it by his own native powers, and his great superiority of genius. For he that wrote

so much, and so fast, would through inadvertency and hurry unavoidably have departed from rules which he might have found in books, but his own truly poetical talent was a guide which could not suffer him to err. A race-horse is graceful in his swiftest pace, and never makes an awkward motion though he is pushed to his utmost speed. A cart-horse might perhaps be taught to play tricks in the riding-school, and might prance and curvet like his betters, but at some unlucky time would be sure to betray the baseness of his original. It is an affair of very little consequence perhaps to the well-being of mankind, but I cannot help regretting that he died so soon. Those words of Virgil, upon the immature death of Marcellus, might serve for his epitaph:

> "*Ostendent terris hunc tantum fata, neque ultra*
> *Esse sinent.*"

Yours, W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Olney, Aug. 31, 1786.

I BEGAN to fear for your health, and every day said to myself, —I must write to Bagot soon, if it be only to ask him how he does,—a measure that I should certainly have pursued long since had I been less absorbed in Homer than I am. But such are my engagements in that quarter, that they make me, I think, good for little else.

Many thanks, my friend, for the names that you have sent me. The Bagots will make a most conspicuous figure among my subscribers, and I shall not, I hope, soon forget my obligations to them.

The unacquaintedness of modern ears with the divine harmony of Milton's numbers, and the principles upon which he constructed them, is the cause of the quarrel that they have with elisions in blank verse. But where is the remedy? In vain should you or I, and a few hundreds more perhaps who have studied his versification, tell them of the superior majesty of it, and that for that majesty it is greatly indebted to those elisions. In their ears, they are discord and dissonance; they lengthen the line beyond its due limits, and are therefore not to be endured. There is a whimsical inconsistence in the judgement of modern readers in this particular. Ask them all round, whom do you account the best writer of blank verse?

and they will reply to a man, Milton, to be sure; Milton against the field! Yet if a writer of the present day should construct his numbers exactly upon Milton's plan, not one in fifty of these professed admirers of Milton would endure him. The case standing thus, what is to be done? An author must either be contented to give disgust to the generality, or he must humour them by sinning against his own judgement. This latter course, so far as elisions are concerned, I have adopted as essential to my success. In every other respect I give as much variety in my measure as I can, I believe I may say as in ten syllables it is possible to give, shifting perpetually the pause and cadence, and accounting myself happy that modern refinement has not yet enacted laws against this also. If it had, I protest to you I would have dropped my design of translating Homer entirely; and with what an indignant stateliness of reluctance I make them the concession that I have mentioned, Mrs. Unwin can witness, who hears all my complaints upon the subject.

After having lived twenty years at Olney, we are on the point of leaving it, but shall not migrate far. We have taken a house in the village of Weston. Lady Hesketh is our good angel, by whose aid we are enabled to pass into a better air, and a more walkable country. The imprisonment that we have suffered here for so many winters has hurt us both. That we may suffer it no longer, she stoops to Olney, lifts us from our swamp, and sets us down on the elevated grounds of Weston Underwood. There, my dear friend, I shall be happy to see you, and to thank you in person for all your kindness.

I do not wonder at the judgement that you form of Fuseli, a foreigner; but you may assure yourself that, foreigner as he is, he has an exquisite taste in English verse. The man is all fire, and an enthusiast in the highest degree on the subject of Homer, and has given me more than once a jog, when I have been inclined to nap with my author. No cold water is to be feared from him that might abate my own fire, rather perhaps too much combustible.

Adieu, *mon ami*, yours faithfully, W. C.

TO MR. JOHNSON.

SIR, Olney, Sept. 2, 1786.

I ENCLOSE a bill on Messrs. Child and Co. for the sum of

twenty-two pounds one shilling, drawn by Mr. Walter Bagot, and dated Blithfield, Aug. 28, 1786, and add the names of his friends who have subscribed it. Some time since I wrote to desire that you would enter the Rev. Walter Bagot himself, as a subscriber of twenty pounds, and shall be obliged to you if you will now send him a receipt for that sum (for which I will account with you in due time) together with receipts for the following persons, under cover to the Rt. Hon. Lord Bagot, Blithfield near Lichfield, Staffordshire. You will observe that they have all made the full payment, and all subscribe for royal paper: and I beg that you will be so kind as to enter them on the subscription board immediately.

The Rt. Hon. Lord Bagot,	2 copies	R. P.	6	6	0
Rt. Hon. Lady Bagot,	1 copy	do.	3	3	0
Rt. Hon. Earl of Uxbridge	1 copy	do.	3	3	0
Rt. Rev. Lord Bishop of Norwich	1 copy	do.	3	3	0
Charles Chester, Esq.	1 copy	do.	3	3	0
William Swinnerton, Esq.	1 copy	do.	3	3	0
		£.	22	1	0

Present, Sir, if you please, my compliments to your friend Mr. Fuseli, and tell him that I shall be obliged to him if, when he has finished the revisal of the eighth book, he will be so kind as to send it to General Cowper's in Charles Street, together with his strictures. Assure him likewise that I will endeavour by the closest attention to all the peculiarities of my original, to save him as much trouble as I can, hereafter. I now perfectly understand what it is that he requires in a translator of Homer, and being convinced of the justness of his demands, will attempt at least to conform to them. Some escapes will happen in so long a work, which he will know how to account for and to pardon. I have been employed a considerable time in the correction of the first seven books, and have not yet began the ninth, but shall in a day or two; and will send it as soon as finished. I am, Sir,

Your most humble servant, WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, Olney, Sept. 24, 1786.

So *interesting a concern* as your tutorship of the young gen-

tleman in question cannot have been so long in a state of indecision without costing you much anxiety. We have sympathized with you under it all, but are glad to be informed that the long delay is not chargeable upon Mr. Hornby. Bishops are κακα θηρια, γαστερες αργοι.—You have heard, I know, from Lady Hesketh, and she has exculpated me from all imputation of wilful silence, from which, indeed, of yourself you are so good as to discharge me, in consideration of my present almost endless labour. I have nothing to say in particular on the subject of Homer, except that I am daily advancing in the work with all the dispatch that a due concern for my own credit in the result will allow.

You have had your troubles, and we ours. This day three weeks your mother received a letter from Mr. Newton, which she has not yet answered, nor is likely to answer hereafter. It gave us both much concern, but her more than me; I suppose because my mind being necessarily occupied in my work, I had not so much leisure to browze upon the wormwood that it contained. The purport of it is a direct accusation of me, and of her an accusation implied, that we have both deviated into forbidden paths, and lead a life unbecoming the Gospel. That many of my friends in London are grieved, and the simple people of Olney astonished; that he never so much doubted of my restoration to Christian privileges as now;—in short, that I converse too much with people of the world, and find too much pleasure in doing so. He concludes with putting your mother in mind that there is still an intercourse between London and Olney; by which he means to insinuate that we cannot offend against the decorum that we are bound to observe, but the news of it will most certainly be conveyed to him. We do not at all doubt it;—we never knew a lie hatched at Olney that waited long for a bearer; and though we do not wonder to find ourselves made the subjects of a false accusation in a place ever fruitful of such productions, we do and must wonder a little, that he should listen to them with so much credulity. I say this, because if he had heard only the truth, or had believed no more than the truth, he would not, I think, have found either me censurable or your mother. And that *she* should be suspected of irregularities is the more wonderful, (for wonderful it would be at any rate,) because she sent him not long before a letter conceived in such strains of piety and

spirituality as ought to have convinced him that she at least was no wanderer. But what is the fact, and how do we spend our [time] in reality? What are the deeds for which we have been represented as thus criminal? Our present course of life differs in nothing from that which we have both held these thirteen years, except that, after great civilities shown us, and many advances made on the part of the Throcks, we visit them. That we visit also at Gayhurst; that we have frequently taken airings with my cousin in her carriage; and that I have sometimes taken a walk with her on a Sunday evening and sometimes by myself, which however your mother has never done. These are the only novelties in our practice; and if by these procedures, so inoffensive in themselves, we yet give offence, offence must needs be given. God and our own consciences acquit us, and we acknowledge no other judges.

The two families with whom we have kicked up this astonishing intercourse are as harmless in their conversation and manners as can be found anywhere. And as to my poor cousin, the only crime that she is guilty of against the people of Olney is, that she has fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and administered comfort to the sick;—except indeed that, by her great kindness, she has given us a little lift in point of condition and circumstances, and has thereby excited envy in some who have not the knack of rejoicing in the prosperity of others. And this I take to be the root of the matter.

My dear William, I do not know that I should have teased your nerves and spirits with this disagreeable theme, had not Mr. Newton talked of applying to you for particulars. He would have done it, he says, when he saw you last, but had not time. You are now qualified to inform him as minutely as we ourselves could of all our enormities! Adieu!

Our sincerest love to yourself and yours, WM. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

THE fish happening to swim uppermost in my mind, I give it the precedence, and begin with returning our thanks for it, not forgetting the circumstance of free carriage. Upon the whole, I think this a handsomer way of acknowledging a present than to tuck it into a postscript.

I find the Register in all respects an entertaining medley; but especially in this, that it has brought to my view some long forgotten pieces of my own production;—I mean by the way two or three. These I have marked with my own initials, and you may be sure I found them peculiarly agreeable, as they had not only the grace of being mine, but that of novelty to recommend them. It is at least twenty years since I saw them. You, I think, was never a dabbler in rhyme. I have been one ever since I was fourteen years of age, when I began with translating an elegy of Tibullus. I have no more right to the name of a poet, than a maker of mouse-traps has to that of an engineer; but my little exploits in this way have at times amused me so much, that I have often wished myself a good one. Such a talent in verse as mine is like a child's rattle,—very entertaining to the trifler that uses it, and very disagreeable to all beside. But it has served to rid me of some melancholy moments, for I only take it up as a gentleman performer does his fiddle. I have this peculiarity belonging to me as a rhymist, that though I am charmed to a great degree with my own work, while it is on the anvil, I can seldom bear to look at it when it is once finished. The more I contemplate it, the more it loses of its value, till I am at last quite disgusted with it. I then throw it by, take it up again perhaps ten years after, and am as much delighted with it as at first.

Few people have the art of being agreeable when they talk of themselves; if you are not weary therefore by this time you pay me a high compliment.

I dare say Miss S—— was much diverted with the conjecture of her friends. The true key to the pleasure she found at Olney was plain enough to be seen, but they chose to overlook it. She brought with her a disposition to be pleased, which whoever does is sure to find a visit agreeable, because they make it so.

Yours, W. C.[1]

[1] This dateless letter, which is probably entitled to a very early place in this collection, was reserved to close the correspondence with Mr. Unwin, from the hope that, before the press advanced so far, the editor might recover those unknown verses of Cowper, to which the letter alludes; but all *researches* for this purpose have failed. HAYLEY.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Olney, Oct. 6, 1786.

You have not heard, I suppose, that the ninth book of my translation is at the bottom of the Thames. But it is even so. A storm overtook it in its way to Kingston, and it sunk, together with the whole cargo of the boat in which it was a passenger;—not figuratively showing, I hope, by its submersion, the fate of all the rest. My kind and generous cousin, who leaves nothing undone that she thinks can conduce to my comfort, encouragement, or convenience, is my transcriber also. *She* wrote the copy, and *she* will have to write it again. ——*Hers* therefore is the damage. I have a thousand reasons to lament that the time approaches when we must lose her. She has made a winterly summer a most delightful one, but the winter itself we must spend without her. W. C.[1]

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston Underwood, Nov. 17, 1786.

My usual time of answering your letters having been unavoidably engrossed by occasions that would not be thrust aside, I have been obliged to postpone the payment of my debt for a whole week. Even now it is not without some difficulty that I discharge it; which you will easily believe, when I tell you that this is only the second day that has seen us inhabitants of our new abode. When God speaks to a chaos, it becomes a scene of order and harmony in a moment; but when his creature have thrown one house into confusion by leaving it, and another by tumbling themselves and their goods into it, not less than many days' labour and contrivance is necessary to give them their proper places. And it belongs to furniture of all kinds, however convenient it may be in its place, to be a nuisance out of it. We find ourselves here in a comfortable dwelling. Such it is in itself; and my cousin, who has spared no expense in dressing it up for us, has made it a genteel one. Such, at least, it will be when its contents are a little harmonized. She left us on Tuesday, and on Wednesday, in the evening, Mrs. Unwin and I took possession. I could not help

[1] In this interval, viz. on the 15th of the following month, the day on which he completed his fifty-fifth year (O. S.) Cowper removed to Weston Underwood.

giving a last look to my old prison and its precincts; and though I cannot easily account for it, having been miserable there so many years, felt something like a heart-ache when took my last leave of a scene, that certainly in itself had no thing to engage affection. But I recollected that I had once been happy there, and could not, without tears in my eyes bid adieu to a place in which God had so often found me. The human mind is a great mystery; mine, at least, appeared to me to be such upon this occasion. I found that I not only had a tenderness for that ruinous abode, because it had once known me happy in the presence of God; but that even the distress I had suffered for so long a time, on account of his absence, had endeared it to me as much. I was weary of every object, had long wished for a change, yet could not take leave without a pang at parting. What consequences are to attend our removal, God only knows. I know well that it is not in situation to effect a cure of melancholy like mine. The change, however, has been entirely a providential one; for much as I wished it, I never uttered that wish, except to Mrs. Unwin. When I learned that the house was to be let, and had seen it, I had a strong desire that Lady Hesketh should take it for herself, if she should happen to like the country. That desire, indeed, is not exactly fulfilled; and yet, upon the whole, is exceeded. We are the tenants; but she assures us that we shall often have her for a guest; and here is room enough for us all. You, I hope, my dear friend, and Mrs. Newton, will want no assurances to convince you that you will always be received here with the sincerest welcome. More welcome than you have been, you cannot be; but better accommodated you may and will be.

I have not proceeded thus far without many interruptions, and though my paper is small, shall be obliged to make my letter still smaller. Our own removal is I believe the only news of Olney. Concerning this you will hear much, and much I doubt not that will have no truth in it. It is already reported there, and has been indeed for some time, that I am turned Papist. You will know how to treat a lie like this which proves nothing but the malignity of its author; but other tales you may possibly hear that will not so readily refute themselves. This, however, I trust you will always find true, that neither Mrs. Unwin nor myself shall have so con-

ducted ourselves in our new neighbourhood, as that you shall have any occasion to be grieved on our account.

Mr. Unwin has been ill of a fever at Winchester, but by a letter from Mr. Thornton we learn that he is recovering, and hopes soon to travel. His Mrs. Unwin has joined him at that place.

Adieu, my dear friend. Mrs. Unwin's affectionate remembrances and mine conclude me ever yours, W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Weston Lodge, Nov. 26, 1786.

It is my birthday, my beloved cousin, and I determine to employ a part of it, that it may not be destitute of festivity, in writing to you. The dark, thick fog that has obscured it, would have been a burthen to me at Olney, but here I have hardly attended to it. The neatness and snugness of our abode compensate all the dreariness of the season, and whether the ways are wet or dry, our house at least is always warm and commodious. Oh for you, my cousin, to partake these comforts with us! I will not begin already to tease you upon that subject, but Mrs. Unwin remembers to have heard from your own lips, that you hate London in the spring. Perhaps therefore by that time, you may be glad to escape from a scene which will be every day growing more disagreeable, that you may enjoy the comforts of the lodge. You well know that the best house has a desolate appearance unfurnished. This house accordingly, since it has been occupied by us and our *meubles*, is as much superior to what it was when you saw it, as you can imagine. The parlour is even elegant. When I say that the parlour is elegant, I do not mean to insinuate that the study is not so. It is neat, warm, and silent, and a much better study than I deserve, if I do not produce in it an incomparable translation of Homer. I think every day of those lines of Milton, and congratulate myself on having obtained, before I am quite superannuated, what he seems not to have hoped for sooner:

> "And may at length my weary age
> Find out the peaceful hermitage!"

For if it is not an hermitage, at least it is a much better thing; and you must always understand, my dear, that when poets

talk of cottages, hermitages, and such like things, they mean a house with six sashes in front, two comfortable parlours, a smart stair-case, and three bedchambers of convenient dimensions; in short, exactly such a house as this.

The Throckmortons continue the most obliging neighbours in the world. One morning last week, they both went with me to the cliff;—a scene, my dear, in which you would delight beyond measure, but which you cannot visit except in the spring or autumn. The heat of summer and the clinging dirt of winter would destroy you. What is called the cliff, is no cliff, nor at all like one, but a beautiful terrace, sloping gently down to the Ouse, and from the brow of which, though not lofty, you have a view of such a valley as makes that which you see from the hills near Olney, and which I have had the honour to celebrate, an affair of no consideration.

Wintry as the weather is, do not suspect that it confines me. I ramble daily, and every day change my ramble. Wherever I go, I find short grass under my feet, and when I have travelled perhaps five miles, come home with shoes not at all too dirty for a drawing-room. I was pacing yesterday under the elms, that surround the field in which stands the great alcove, when lifting my eyes I saw two black genteel figures bolt through a hedge into the path where I was walking. You guess already who they were, and that they could be nobody but our neighbours. They had seen me from a hill at a distance, and had traversed a great turnip-field to get at me. You see therefore, my dear, that I am in some request. Alas! in too much request with some people. The verses of Cadwallader have found me at last.

I am charmed with your account of our little cousin[1] at Kensington. If the world does not spoil him hereafter, he will be a valuable man.

Good night, and may God bless thee. W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, Dec. 4, 1786.

It distresses me to think that this cannot reach you before the newspapers will inform you of the death of our dear friend at Winchester, an event for which after the favourable accounts *I sent* you, you cannot be but indifferently prepared. Those

[1] Lord Cowper.

accounts however were such as we received ourselves, and were well warranted at the time when they were sent to us, by such appearances as seemed to afford the most reasonable hope of his recovery. A sudden turn in his distemper has, nevertheless, baffled that hope, and has in a few moments bereaved us, respecting poor Unwin, of every consolation, except the invaluable certainty of his being thither gone whence none who loved him as he deserved can deliberately wish him to return. Instead of saying more, my dear, on this melancholy subject, I will subjoin a copy of Mr. Henry Thornton's last letter, which we received this morning. It came accompanied by another which ought to have reached us by the preceding post, but which being delayed by some accident, came with it. Poor Mrs. Unwin you will suppose is in great affliction, but she bears her severe heart-aches with a resignation to the will of God, that does him and herself honour. She sends her love to you. Here follows the letter.—

MADAM,

I wrote you a discouraging letter yesterday, which my fears for Mr. Unwin very naturally suggested even at the time when I wrote it. My letter was written on Tuesday evening. His fever was then unabated, though he was free from pain, clear and distinct in his head and recollection, and more composed than he had been at almost any period of his illness. On Tuesday night, seeing no very certain and instant danger, I prevailed on Mrs. Unwin to lie down for a few hours while the physician and I sat up with him. About three in the morning I had about half an hour's very comfortable conversation with him alone. He was as sensible of his danger as I could be, and as calm and collected as ever he was in his life; mentioned many of his friends, to whom he desired to be remembered, and particularly named yourself, as well as Mr. Cowper and Lady Hesketh. He talked even of his own interment, and of every thing that it might be useful to me (as a joint-executor with his wife) to know. He desired me to read a prayer to him, and one or two psalms. The hope he expressed of eternal happiness was a very humble one, (as indeed it always has been,) but to his friends by no means therefore the less sure. His mind was calm upon this and every other subject. He asked me if there were no hopes at all of his recovery; to which I answered him, that

there were little or none. He continued therefore perfectly sensible of his own dissolution for several hours after, and was so calm and so little dismayed, that those around him who knew the irritability of his habit and his fears on this as well as every affecting subject, were much comforted during their attention to him. About seven in the morning Mrs. Unwin came down to him, while I lay down for an hour or two. He was still sensible. Between ten and eleven his head seemed a little confused, but no other alteration appeared. In half an hour after, his doctor from Salisbury went up to see him, and he desired to be raised in his bed as usual, but as he seemed, while they raised him, to breathe rather harder than before, the doctor hinted to me that I should lead Mrs. Unwin (who had helped to raise him) out of the room; and in a few minutes his breath gradually spent itself without any appearance of struggle.

This, my dear, is not the end of the letter, but it is all that relates to the death-bed circumstances of this valuable man. The disorder that was immediately followed by these dying symptoms was in his bowels, and seized him, I think, the day before his decease. It did not indeed last many hours, but seems to have left him perfectly exhausted. The fever was a putrid one. Mr. Thornton caught it first, but being stronger soon recovered. Poor Unwin fell its victim. What we must do now, my dear, for a tutor to little Hesketh I know not. My stock of recommendation was soon exhausted. Mr. Hornby will be himself, I suppose, the likeliest person to find a third. Surely there was never any thing more extraordinary than the deaths of two, chosen with such religious attention to their qualifications, just before they could enter on their office. Man boasts himself wise, yet to man is every thing inscrutable.

The chairs lie still in the warehouse of the inn at Smithfield. We sent this morning to enquire after them, and Rogers the Great knows nought about them. We must hope for them next week. Mr. Newman writes me word that they are at this time doing me the honour to read my Task at Freemasons' Hall. It could not have a more effectual advertisement, nor one more likely to occasion a speedy call for a third edition. Perhaps it may have the fate of John Gilpin, who was little known or noticed for a long time after his first appearance, and then made noise enough. I have a letter from a Mr. Biddlecombe of Somerford, near Christ Church, in the New Forest, expressive of

the pleasure that my volumes have given to him, and inviting me to visit him if I should ever find myself in that part of Hampshire. I answer it by this post. You shall see it, my dear, as soon as I can send it franked. I am obliged also to write to Mr. H. Thornton by this post, which occasions you a shorter letter; but I have still something to say. I have finished the twelfth book, and when Mr. Throckmorton and I were walking together on Friday morning, I told him that I had a design to call upon Mrs. T. for her obliging and kind offer made me last summer. He immediately recollected it, and said with a smile—"You mean, I suppose, to transcribe for you? She will do it with great pleasure."—The next morning I sent her that same twelfth book, and understand that she has been hard at work. Unfortunately they leave the country on Tuesday, so that she will not be able, I suppose, to finish. She told me however this minute, when she stopped on horseback at the gate, that she had transcribed eleven pages. He was with me when she called, and they are gone together to Gayhurst.

Adieu, my precious! I am going to refresh myself with air and sunshine this fine morning, having been imprisoned all yesterday by the rain.

Ever your affectionate WM. COWPER.

We shall be forced to trouble you, my coz, on this sad occasion. Mrs. U. begs that you will be so kind as to let Mrs. Eaton make her up two mourning caps. The only two persons who could make them at Olney lie in, or are just on the point of it. And I am in want of a pair of black shoe-buckles.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Dec. 4. 1786.

I SENT you, my dear, a melancholy letter, and I do not know that I shall now send you one very unlike it. Not that any thing occurs in consequence of our late loss more afflictive than was to be expected, but the mind does not perfectly recover its tone after a shock like that which has been felt so lately. This I observe, that though my experience has long since taught me, that this is a world of shadows, and that it is the more prudent, as well as the more Christian course to possess the comforts that we find in it, as if we possessed them not, it is no easy matter to reduce this doctrine into practice. We forget that *that God who gave them*, may, when he pleases, take them

away; and that perhaps it may please him to take them at a time when we least expect, or are least disposed to part from them. Thus it has happened in the present case. There never was a moment in Unwin's life, when there seemed to be more urgent want of him than the moment in which he died. He had attained to an age when, if they are at any time useful, men become useful to their families, their friends, and the world. His parish began to feel, and to be sensible of the advantages of his ministry. The clergy around him were many of them awed by his example. His children were thriving under his own tuition and management, and his eldest boy is likely to feel his loss severely, being by his years in some respect qualified to understand the value of such a parent; by his literary proficiency too clever for a schoolboy, and too young at the same time for the university. The removal of a man in the prime of life of such a character, and with such connexions, seems to make a void in society that can never be filled. God seemed to have made him just what he was, that he might be a blessing to others, and when the influence of his character and abilities began to be felt, removed him. These are mysteries, my dear, that we cannot contemplate without astonishment, but which will nevertheless be explained hereafter, and must in the mean time be revered in silence. It is well for his mother, that she has spent her life in the practice of an habitual acquiescence in the dispensations of Providence, else I know that this stroke would have been heavier, after all that she has suffered upon another account, than she could have borne. She derives, as she well may, great consolation from the thought that he lived the life, and died the death of a Christian. The consequence is, if possible, more unavoidable than the most mathematical conclusion, that therefore he is happy. So farewell, my friend Unwin! the first man for whom I conceived a friendship after my removal from St. Alban's, and for whom I cannot but still continue to feel a friendship, though I shall see thee with these eyes no more.

W. C.

TO ROBERT SMITH, ESQ.

Weston Underwood, near Olney.

MY DEAR SIR, Dec. 9, 1786.

We have indeed suffered a great loss by the death of our friend *Unwin*; and the shock that attended it was the more severe, as

till within a few hours of his decease there seemed to be no very alarming symptoms. All the accounts that we received from Mr. Henry Thornton, who acted like a true friend on the occasion, and with a tenderness toward all concerned, that does him great honour, encouraged our hopes of his recovery; and Mrs. Unwin herself found him on her arrival at Winchester so cheerful, and in appearance so likely to live, that her letter also seemed to promise us all that we could wish on the subject. But an unexpected turn in his distemper, which suddenly seized his bowels, dashed all our hopes, and deprived us almost immediately of a man whom we must ever regret. His mind having been from his infancy deeply tinctured with religious sentiments, he was always impressed with a sense of the importance of the great change of all; and on former occasions, when at any time he found himself indisposed, was consequently subject to distressing alarms and apprehensions. But in this last instance, his mind was from the first composed and easy; his fears were taken away, and succeeded by such a resignation as warrants us in saying, "that God made all his bed in his sickness." I believe it is always thus, where the heart, though upright toward God, as Unwin's assuredly was, is yet troubled with the fear of death. When death indeed comes, he is either welcome, or at least has lost his sting.

I have known many such instances; and his mother, from the moment that she learned with what tranquillity he was favoured in his illness, for that very reason expected that it would be his last. Yet not with so much certainty, but that the favourable accounts of him at length, in a great measure, superseded that persuasion.

She begs me to assure you, my dear sir, how sensible she is, as well as myself, of the kindness of your inquiries. She suffers this stroke, not with more patience and submission than I expected, for I never knew her hurried by any affliction into the loss of either, but in appearance at least, and at present, with less injury to her health than I apprehended. She observed to me, after reading your kind letter, that though it was a proof of the greatness of her loss, it yet afforded her pleasure, though a melancholy one, to see how much her son had been loved and valued by such a person as yourself.

Mrs. Unwin wrote to her daughter-in-law, to invite her and the family hither, hoping that a change of scene, and a situa-

tion so pleasant as this, may be of service to her; but we have, not yet received her answer. I have good hope however that great as her affliction must be, she will yet be able to support it, for she well knows whither to resort for consolation.

The virtues and amiable qualities of our friends are the things for which we most wish to keep them, but they are on the other hand the very things that in particular ought to reconcile us to their departure. We find ourselves sometimes connected with, and engaged in affection too, to a person of whose readiness and fitness for another life we cannot have the highest opinion. The death of such men has a bitterness in it, both to themselves and survivors, which, thank God! is not to be found in the death of Unwin.

I know, my dear sir, how much you valued him, and I know also how much he valued you. With respect to him, all is well; and of you, if I should survive you, which perhaps is not very probable, I shall say the same.

In the mean time, believe me with the warmest wishes for your health and happiness, and with Mrs. Unwin's affectionate respects, Yours, my dear sir,

Most faithfully, W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Weston, Dec. 9, 1786.

I AM perfectly sure that you are mistaken, though I do not wonder at it, considering the singular nature of the event, in the judgement that you form of poor Unwin's death, as it affects the interest of his intended pupil. When a tutor was wanted for him, you sought out the wisest and best man within the circle of your connexions. It pleased God to take him home to himself. Men eminently wise and good are very apt to die, because they are fit to do so. You found in Unwin a man worthy to succeed him; and He, in whose hands are the issues of life and death, seeing no doubt that Unwin was ripe for a removal into a better state, removed him also. The matter viewed in this light seems not so wonderful as to refuse all explanation, except such as in a melancholy moment you have given to it. And I am so convinced that the little boy's destiny had no influence at all in hastening the death of his *tutors elect*, that were it not impossible on more accounts than one that I should be able to serve him in that capacity, I

would without the least fear of dying a moment the sooner, offer myself to that office; I would even do it, were I conscious of the same fitness for another and a better state, that I believe them to have been both endowed with: in that case, I perhaps might die too, but if I should, it would not be on account of that connexion. Neither, my dear, had your interference with the business any thing to do with the catastrophe. Your whole conduct in it must have been acceptable in the sight of God, as it was directed by principles of the purest benevolence.

I have not touched Homer to-day. Yesterday was one of my terrible seasons, and when I arose this morning, I found that I had not sufficiently recovered myself to engage in such an occupation. Having letters to write, I the more willingly gave myself a dispensation. Good night.

Yours ever, W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston, Dec. 9, 1786.

We had just begun to enjoy the pleasantness of our new situation, to find at least as much comfort in it as the season of the year would permit, when affliction found us out in our retreat, and the news reached us of the death of Mr. Unwin. He had taken a western tour with Mr. Henry Thornton, and in his return, at Winchester, was seized with a putrid fever, which sent him to his grave. He is gone to it, however, though young, as fit for it as age itself could have made him; regretted indeed, and always to be regretted by those who knew him, for he had every thing that makes a man valuable both in his principles and in his manners, but leaving still this consolation to his surviving friends, that he was desirable in this world chiefly because he was so well prepared for a better.

I find myself here situated exactly to my mind. Weston is one of the prettiest villages in England, and the walks about it at all seasons of the year delightful. I know that you will rejoice with me in the change that we have made, and for which I am altogether indebted to Lady Hesketh. It is a change as great as (to compare metropolitan things with rural) from St. Giles's to Grosvenor Square. Our house is in all respects commodious, and in some degree elegant; and I cannot give you a better idea of that which we have left, than by

telling you the present candidates for it are a publican and a shoemaker. W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Dec. 11, 1786.

SHENSTONE, my dearest cousin, in his commentary on the vulgar adage which says, Second thoughts are best, observes that the *third* thought generally resolves itself into the *first*. Thus it has happened to me. My first thought was to effect a transposition of the old glasses into the new frame; my second, that perhaps both the old glasses and the new frame might be broken in the experiment; and my third, nevertheless, to make the trial. Accordingly I walked down to Olney this day, referred the matter to the watchmaker's consideration, and he has succeeded in the attempt to a wonder. I am at this moment peering through the same medium as usual, but with the advantage of a more ornamental mounting. I conjecture, by the way, from a passage in your note that accompanied the parcel, that I am indebted not *only* to you for this new accession to my elegant accommodations, but to some Incognito likewise; I beg that you will present my thanks accordingly. The clerk of the parish has made me a new pair of straps to my buckles; and the gingerbread, by its genial warmth, has delivered me since dinner from a distension of stomach that was immoderately troublesome, so that I am the better for you, my dear, from head to foot. Long time I in vain endeavoured to make myself master of the lamp, and was obliged at last to call in William to my assistance. Now there are certain things which great geniuses miss, and which men born without any understanding at all hit immediately. In justification of the truth of this remark, William, who is a lump of dough, who never can be more dead than he is till he has been buried a month, explained it to *me* in a moment; accordingly we have used it twice, to my great satisfaction.

I sent Fuseli a hare by the coach that went up this morning, and certainly no man could better deserve it, though it was one of the largest that ever was seen. I could not resist the impulse that I felt to acknowledge my obligations to his critical exertions; and yet shall be sorry that I complied with it, *if in* consequence of my civility he should become at all less *rigorous* in his demands, or less severe in his animadversions.

I am on the point of finishing the correction of the ninth book, which I have now adjusted to two sheets filled with his strictures. He observes at the close of them, that to execute a translation of this book in particular, with felicity, appears to him a prodigious task. He considers it, and I think justly, as one of the most consummate efforts of genius handed down to us from antiquity, and calls upon me for my utmost exertions. I have not failed to make them, with what success will be seen hereafter; but of this I am sure, that I have much improved it. The good-natured Padre of the Hall has offered me, in Mrs. Throckmorton's absence, his transcribing assistance, of which I shall avail myself, and deliver over to him the book in question in a day or two.

Mr. Chester paid me a morning visit about the middle of last week. He was, though a man naturally reserved, chatty and good humoured on the occasion, and when he took leave begged that I would not put myself to inconvenience for the sake of returning his visit with a punctilious alacrity in this wet and dirty season:—an allowance for which I was obliged to him, for since we now live five miles asunder, and I never ride, it does not at present occur to me by what means I could possibly get at him.

Our old house is not yet tenanted, but there are candidates for it. They are two who would divide the building between them—a shoemaker, and the alemonger at the Horse and Groom. The carpenter in the mean time has assured Mr. Smith, the landlord, that unless it be well propped and speedily it will infallibly fall. Thank you, my dear, for saving our poor noddles from such imminent danger.

I learned to-day, at the Bull, that the liquors which the General has sent me I may expect to see here to-morrow; there are four hampers of sherry, and one of brandy and rum. The looking-glass which you destined to the study,—that, I mean, which came out of your chamber at the vicarage,—we have ventured to put up in the parlour. It is quite large enough, and makes a very smart appearance. The other, which you may remember to have seen in my chamber at Olney, we have transferred to Nibbs, who, being paid for a new frame is to furnish us with a new glass for it.

What course have you taken with our friend Arnott? Has Lord Cowper discovered any intentions to perform the part of

a Mecænas toward me, or did he leave England forgetful that there was so important a character in it as myself? His little boy, I hope, has recovered. It would grieve me if the family should lose so much generosity as seems to be included in that small bosom.

The cloud that I mentioned to you, my cousin, has passed away, or perhaps the skirts of it may still hang over me. I feel myself, however, tolerably brisk, and tell you so because I know you will be glad to hear it. The grinners at John Gilpin little dream what the author sometimes suffers. How I hated myself yesterday for having ever wrote it!

May God bless thee, my dear! adieu.

Ever yours, W. C.

Soon after this reaches you, we hope that you will receive a turkey. It was Mrs. Throckmorton's legacy to us when she went. It never had the honour to be crammed, for she crams none, but perhaps may not be the worse in flavour on that account. She fed it daily with her own hand.

TO MR. WILLIAM CHURCHEY,

ATTORNEY-AT-LAW, HAY, BRECON.

SIR, Weston Underwood, near Olney, Bucks, Dec. 13, 1786.

I RETURN as speedy an answer to your letter as possible, though it may seem to have been long delayed. When I told you that my time is almost totally engaged by my present undertaking, I did not at all exceed the truth. If you consider the length of the work, and the accuracy requisite to a successful performance of it, you will easily believe me.

I congratulate you on your possession of a poetical talent, which at such hours of leisure as you can win from a profession the least amusing in the world, must afford you often an agreeable entertainment. I find your versification smooth, your language correct and forcible, and especially in your translation of the Art of Painting. But you ask me, would I advise you to publish? I would advise every man to publish whose subjects are well chosen, whose sentiments are just, and who can afford to be a loser, if that should happen, by his publication. You are sensible that it is not an age in which poetry of a religious or moral tendency is likely to find many readers. But I know well that publication is necessary to give an edge to the poetical turn, and that what we produce in the

closet, is never a vigorous birth if we intend that it should die there. For my own part I could no more amuse myself with writing verse, if I did not print it when written, than with the study of tactics, for which I can never have any real occasion. I therefore reason thus. You are a man of business: your business is in itself dry and fatiguing: you require a relaxation of your attention: you are capable of poetical exertions: there is no employment of the mind more innocent, or as it may be managed, more beneficial to others; but the most effectual spur to industry in all such exertions, is to lay the fruit of them before the public. From which premises I can draw no other conclusion than that I ought to advise you to print; especially as I understand that you have already dealt with printers, and can consequently better estimate your probability of success, than I, or any man can do it for you.

I was not willing to send you so expensive a packet by the post as I must have sent had I returned the pieces with which you have favoured me at this time. If you will be so good as to signify to me in what way you would wish to have them remitted to you, I will do accordingly. You may possibly have some friend in town through whose hands they may pass commodiously into yours.

I am much indebted to you for the obliging notice that you have taken of me in the verses that you mention: and am, Sir, with much respect,

Your most humble servant, WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Dec. 16, 1786.

THE death of one whom I valued as I did Mr. Unwin, is a subject on which I could say much, and with much feeling. But habituated as my mind has been these many years to melancholy themes, I am glad to excuse myself the contemplation of them as much as possible. I will only observe, that the death of so young a man, whom I so lately saw in good health, and whose life was so desirable on every account, has something in it peculiarly distressing. I cannot think of the widow and the children that he has left, without an heart-ache that I remember not to have felt before. We may well say, that the ways of God are mysterious: in truth they are so, and to a degree that only such events can give us any conception of.

Mrs. Unwin begs me to give her love to you, with thanks for your kind letter. Hers has been so much a life of affliction, that whatever occurs to her in that shape, has not, at least, the terrors of novelty to embitter it. She is supported under this, as she has been under a thousand others, with a submission of which I never saw her deprived for a moment.

We have not been visited by a single neighbour since we came to Weston. For this however I can account easily, and without seeing the least occasion to be either grieved or offended. And to say the truth, in my present state of mind, and with my present occupation in hand, I cannot be much concerned for it. I am often oppressed with melancholy to a degree that would make company very unwelcome, and when I am not so, still find myself engaged in a work that calls for all my time and my closest application. I do not know Mr. John Higgins even by sight, and if I have at any time passed him without showing him the civility due to so respectable a neighbour, it has been owing to no other cause. But he should recollect that it does not rest with me to commence an acquaintance. The resident inhabitants of a place must always make the first advances to a new comer, or they make a visiting intercourse impossible. It can with no propriety originate from me, and I dare say he is well aware of it.

Once, since we left Olney, I had occasion to call at our old dwelling; and never did I see so forlorn and woeful a spectacle. Deserted of its inhabitants, it seemed as if it could never be dwelt in for ever. The coldness of it, the dreariness, and the dirt, made me think it no unapt resemblance of a soul that God has forsaken. While he dwelt in it, and manifested himself there, he could create his own accommodations, and give it occasionally the appearance of a palace; but the moment he withdraws, and takes with him all the furniture and embellishment of his graces, it becomes what it was before he entered it —the habitation of vermin, and the image of desolation. Sometimes I envy the living, but not much, or not long; for while they live, as we call it, they too are liable to desertion. But the dead who have died in the Lord, I envy always; for they, I take it for granted, can be no more forsaken.

This Babylon, however, that we have left behind us, ruinous as it is, the ceilings cracked and the walls crumbling, still *finds some* who covet it. A shoemaker and an alemonger

have proposed themselves as joint candidates to succeed us. Some small difference between them and the landlord, on the subject of rent, has hitherto kept them out; but at last they will probably agree. In the mean time Mr. Raban prophesies its fall, and tells them that they will occupy it at the hazard of their lives, unless it be well propped before they enter it. We have not, therefore, left it much too soon; and this we knew before we migrated, though the same prophet would never speak out, so long as only our heads were in danger.

I wish you well through your laborious task of transcribing. I hope the good lady's meditations are such as amuse you rather more, while you copy them, than meditations in general would;—which, for the most part, have appeared to me the most laboured, insipid, and unnatural of all productions.

Adieu, my dear friend. Thanks for very fine oysters, and an excellent cocoa-nut, received yesterday. Our love attends you both. Ever yours, W. C.

P. S. Nat. Gee, with a long face, asks me if I hear any news of his dividend.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Weston, Dec. 21, 1786.

Your welcome letter, my beloved cousin, which ought by the date to have arrived on Sunday, being by some untoward accident delayed, came not till yesterday. It came however, and has relieved me from a thousand distressing apprehensions on your account.

The dew of your intelligence has refreshed my poetical laurels. A little praise now and then is very good for your hard-working poet, who is apt to grow languid, and perhaps careless without it. Praise I find affects us as money does. The more a man gets of it, with the more vigilance he watches over and preserves it. Such at least is its effect on me, and you may assure yourself that I will never lose a mite of it for want of care.

I have already invited the good Padre in general terms, and he shall positively dine here next week, whether he will or not. I do not at all suspect that his kindness to Protestants has any thing insidious in it, any more than I suspect that he transcribes Homer for me with a view to my conversion. He would find me a tough piece of business I can tell him; for

when I had no religion at all, I had yet a terrible dread of the Pope. How much more now!

I should have sent you a longer letter, but was obliged to devote my last evening to the melancholy employment of composing a Latin inscription for the tomb-stone of poor William, two copies of which I wrote out and enclosed, one to Henry Thornton, and one to Mr. Newton. Homer stands by me biting his thumbs, and swears that if I do not leave off directly, he will choke me with bristly Greek, that shall stick in my throat for ever. W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Dec. 24, 1786.

You must by no means, my dearest coz, pursue the plan that has suggested itself to you on the supposed loss of your letter. In the first place I choose that my Sundays, like the Sundays of other people, shall be distinguished by something that shall make me look forward to them with agreeable expectation, and for that reason desire that they may always bring me a letter from you. In the next place, if I know when to *expect* a letter, I know likewise when to *enquire after* a letter, if it happens not to come; a circumstance of some importance, considering how excessively careless they are at the Swan, where letters are sometimes overlooked, and do not arrive at their destination, if no inquiry be made, till some days have passed after their arrival at Olney. It has happened frequently to me to receive a letter long after all the rest have been delivered, and the Padre assured me that Mr. Throckmorton has sent notes three several times to Mrs. Marriot, complaining of this neglect. For these reasons, my dear, thou must write still on Saturdays, and as often on other days as thou pleasest.

The screens came safe, and one of them is at this moment interposed between me and the fire, much to the comfort of my peepers. The other of them being fitted up with a screw that was useless, I have consigned to proper hands, that it may be made as serviceable as its brother. They are very neat, and I account them a great acquisition. Our carpenter assures me that the lameness of the chairs was not owing to any injury received in their journey, but that the maker never properly finished them. They were not high when they came, and in order to reduce them to a level, we have lowered them an inch.

Thou knowest, child, that the short foot could not be lengthened, for which reason we shortened the long ones. The box containing the plate and the brooms reached us yesterday, and nothing had suffered the least damage by the way. Every thing is smart, every thing is elegant, and we admire them all. The short candle-sticks are short enough. I am now writing with those upon the table; Mrs. U. is reading opposite, and they suit us both exactly. With the money that you have in hand, you may purchase, my dear, at your most convenient time, a tea-urn; that which we have at present having never been handsome, and being now old and patched. A parson once, as he walked across the parlour, pushed it down with his belly, and it never perfectly recovered itself. We want likewise a tea-waiter, meaning, if you please, such a one as you may remember to have seen at the Hall, a wooden one. To which you may add, from the same fund, three or four yards of yard-wide muslin, wherewithal to make neckcloths for my worship. If after all these disbursements any thing should be left in the bottom of the purse, we shall be obliged to you if you will expend it in the purchase of silk pocket-handkerchiefs. There, my precious—I think I have charged thee with commissions in plenty.

You neither must nor shall deny us the pleasure of sending to you such small matters as we do. As to the partridges, you may recollect possibly, when I remind you of it, that I never eat them; they refuse to pass my stomach; and Mrs. Unwin rejoiced in receiving then only because she could pack them away to you—therefore never lay us under any embargoes of this kind, for I tell you beforehand, that we are both incorrigible. My beloved cousin, the first thing I open my eyes upon in a morning, is it not the bed in which you have laid me? Did you not, in our old dismal parlour at Olney, give me the tea on which I breakfast?—the chocolate that I drank at noon, and the table at which I dine?—the every thing, in short, that I possess in the shape of convenience, is it not all from you? and is it possible, think you, that we should either of us overlook an opportunity of making such a tiny acknowledgement of your kindness? Assure yourself that never, while my name is Giles Gingerbread, will I dishonour my glorious ancestry, and my illustrious appellation, by so unworthy a conduct. I love you at my heart, and so does Mrs.

U., and we must say thank you, and send you a peppercorn when we can. So thank you, my dear, for the brawn and the chine, and for all the good things that you announce, and at present I will, for your sake, say no more of thanksgiving.

I have answered the Welshman's letter, and have a hope that I shall hear no more of him. He desired my advice, whether to publish or not. In answer, I congratulated him on the possession of a poetical talent, with which he might always amuse himself when fatigued with the weightier matters of the law. As to publication, I recommended it to him by all means, as the principal incentive to exertion. And with regard to his probability of success, I told him that, as he had, I understood, already made the experiment by appearing in print, he could judge how that matter stood, better than I or any man could do it for him. What could I say, my dear? I was really unwilling to mortify a brother bard, and yet could not avoid it but at the expense of common honesty.

The Padre is to dine with us on Thursday next. I am highly pleased with him, and intend to make all possible advances to a nearer acquaintance. Why he is so silent in company I know not. Perhaps he is reserved, like some other people: or perhaps he holds it unsuitable to his function to be forward in mixed conversation. Certain it is, that he has enough to say when he and I are together. He has transcribed the ninth book for me, and is now transcribing the twelfth, which Mrs. Throckmorton left unfinished. Poor Teedon has dined with us once, and it did me good to stuff him.

We have heard from the poor widow, after whom you so kindly enquire. She answered a letter of Mrs. Unwin's about a week since. Her answer was affectionate, tender, and melancholy to a great degree, but not without expressions of hope and confidence in God. We understand that she has suffered much in her health, as well as in her mind. It could not be otherwise, for she was attached to her husband in the extreme. We have learned by a sidewind, since I mentioned her last, that Billy left every thing, or almost every thing, to the children. But she has at present one hundred pounds a year, and will have another hundred hereafter, if she outlives Mrs. U., being jointured in her estate. In the mean time, her sister lives with her, who has, I believe, determined never to marry, from which circumstance she must doubtless derive advantage. She

spent some time at Clapham, after her return from Winchester, is now with Mr. John Unwin at Croydon, and goes soon to her gloomy mansion, as she calls it, in Essex. We asked her hither, in hope that a little time spent at Weston might be of use to her, but her affairs would not suffer her to come. She is greatly to be pitied; and whether she will ever recover the stroke is, I think, very uncertain.

I had some time since a very clever letter from Henry C. which I answered as well as I could, but not in kind. I seem to myself immoderately stupid on epistolary occasions, and especially when I wish to shine. Such I seem now, and such to have been ever since I began. So much the worse for you. Pray, my dear, send me a bit of Indian glue, and an almanack.

It gives me true pleasure to learn that the General at least says he is better, but it would give me much more to hear others say the same. Thank your sister for her instructions concerning the lamp, which shall he exactly followed.

I am, my dearest, Your most Gingerbread Giles, &c.

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston, Jan. 3, 1787.

You wish to hear from me at any calm interval of epic frenzy. An interval presents itself, but whether calm or not, is perhaps doubtful. Is it possible for a man to be calm, who for three weeks past has been perpetually occupied in slaughter,—letting out one man's bowels, smiting another through the gullet, transfixing the liver of another, and lodging an arrow in the buttock of a fourth? Read the thirteenth book of the Iliad, and you will find such amusing incidents as these the subject of it, the sole subject. In order to interest myself in it, and to catch the spirit of it, I had need discard all humanity. It is woeful work; and were the best poet in the world to give us at this day such a list of killed and wounded, he would not escape universal censure, to the praise of a more enlightened age be it spoken. I have waded through much blood, and through much more I must wade before I shall have finished. I determine in the mean time to account it all very sublime, and for two reasons,—First, because all the learned think so; and secondly, because I am to translate it. But were I an in*different by-stander,* perhaps I should venture to wish that

Homer had applied his wonderful powers to a less disgusting subject. He has in the Odyssey, and I long to get at it.

I have not the good fortune to meet with any of these fine things, that you say are printed in my praise. But I learn from certain advertisements in the Morning Herald, that I make a conspicuous figure in the entertainments of Freemasons' Hall. I learn also that my volumes are out of print, and that a third edition is soon to be published. But if I am not gratified with the sight of odes composed to my honour and glory, I have at least been tickled with some *douceurs* of a very flattering nature by the post. A lady unknown addresses the best of men;—an unknown gentleman has read my inimitable poems, and invites me to his seat in Hampshire;—another incognito gives me hopes of a memorial in his garden, and a Welsh attorney sends me his verses to revise, and obligingly asks,

> "Say, shall my little bark attendant sail,
> Pursue the triumph, and partake the gale?"

If you find me a little vain hereafter, my friend, you must excuse it, in consideration of these powerful incentives, especially the latter; for surely the poet who can charm an attorney, especially a Welsh one, must be at least an Orpheus, if not something greater.

Mrs. Unwin is as much delighted as myself with our present situation. But it is a sort of April-weather life that we lead in this world. A little sunshine is generally the prelude to a storm. Hardly had we begun to enjoy the change, when the death of her son cast a gloom upon every thing. He was a most exemplary man; of your order; learned, polite, and amiable. The father of lovely children, and the husband of a wife (very much like dear Mrs. Bagot) who adored him.

Adieu, my friend! Your affectionate W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Jan. 8, 1787.

I HAVE had a little nervous fever lately, my dear, that has somewhat abridged my sleep; and though I find myself better to-day than I have been since it seized me, yet I feel my head *lightish*, and not in the best order for writing. You will find me therefore perhaps not only less alert in my manner than I

usually am when my spirits are good, but rather shorter. I will however proceed to scribble till I find that it fatigues me, and then will do as I know you would bid me do were you here, shut up my desk, and take a walk.

The good General tells me that in the eight first books which I have sent him, he still finds alterations and amendments necessary, of which I myself am equally persuaded; and he asks my leave to lay them before an intimate friend of his, of whom he gives a character that bespeaks him highly deserving such a trust. To this I have no objection, desiring only to make the translation as perfect as I can make it. If God grant me life and health, I would spare no labour to secure that point. The General's letter is extremely kind, and both for matter and manner like all the rest of his dealings with his cousin the poet.

I had a letter also yesterday from Mr. Smith, member for Nottingham. Though we never saw each other, he writes to me in the most friendly terms, and interests himself much in my Homer, and in the success of my subscription. Speaking on this latter subject, he says that my poems are read by hundreds who know nothing of my proposals, and makes no doubt that they would subscribe if they did. I have myself always thought them imperfectly, or rather insufficiently announced.

I could pity the poor woman who has been weak enough to claim my song. Such pilferings are sure to be detected. I wrote it, I know not how long, but I suppose four years ago. The Rose in question was a Rose given to Lady Austen by Mrs. Unwin, and the incident that suggested the subject occurred in the room in which you slept at the vicarage, which Lady Austen made her dining-room. Some time since, Mr. Bull going to London, I gave him a copy of it, which he undertook to convey to Nichols, the printer of the Gentleman's Magazine. He showed it to a Mrs. C———, who begged to copy it, and promised to send it to the printer's by her servant. Three or four months afterwards, and when I had concluded it was lost, I saw it in the Gentleman's Magazine, with my signature, W. C. Poor simpleton! She will find now perhaps that the Rose had a thorn, and that she has pricked her fingers with it. Adieu! my beloved cousin. W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Jan. 13, 1787.

It gave me pleasure, such as it was, to learn by a letter from Mr. H. Thornton, that the Inscription for the tomb of poor Unwin has been approved of. The dead have nothing to do with human praises; but if they die in the Lord, they have abundant praises to render Him; which is far better. The dead, whatever they leave behind them, have nothing to regret. Good Christians are the only creatures in the world that are truly good; and them they will see again, and see them improved: therefore them they regret not. Regret is for the living. What we get, we soon lose; and what we lose, we regret. The most obvious consolation in this case seems to be, that we who regret others, shall quickly become objects of regret ourselves; for mankind are continually passing off in a rapid succession.

I have many kind friends, who, like yourself, wish that, instead of turning my endeavours to a translation of Homer, I had proceeded in the way of original poetry. But I can truly say that it was ordered otherwise, not by me, but by the Providence that governs all my thoughts, and directs my attentions as he pleases. It may seem strange, but it is true, that after having written a volume, in general with great ease to myself, I found it impossible to write another page. The mind of man is not a fountain, but a cistern; and mine, God knows, a broken one. It is my creed, that the intellect depends as much, both for the energy and the multitude of its exertions, upon the operations of *God's* agency upon it, as the heart, for the exercise of its graces, upon the influence of the Holy Spirit. According to this persuasion, I may very reasonably affirm, that it was not God's pleasure that I should proceed in the same track, because he did not enable me to do it. A whole year I waited and waited in circumstances of mind that made a state of non-employment peculiarly irksome to me. I longed for the pen, as the only remedy, but I could find no subject; extreme distress of spirit at last drove me, as, if I mistake not, I told you some time since, to lay Homer before me, and translate for amusement. Why it pleased God that I

should be hunted into such a business, of such enormous length and labour, by miseries for which He did not see good to afford me any other remedy, I know not. But so it was; and jejune as the consolation may be, and unsuited to the exigencies of a mind that once was spiritual, yet a thousand times have I been glad of it; for a thousand times it has served at least to divert my attention, in some degree, from such terrible tempests as I believe have seldom been permitted to beat upon a human mind. Let my friends, therefore, who wish me some little measure of tranquillity in the performance of the most turbulent voyage that ever Christian mariner made, be contented, that, having Homer's mountains and forests to windward, I escape, under their shelter, from the force of many a gust that would almost overset me; especially when they consider that, not by choice, but by necessity, I make *them* my refuge. As to fame, and honour, and glory, that may be acquired by poetical feats of any sort, God knows, that if I could lay me down in my grave with hope at my side, or sit with hope at my side in a dungeon all the residue of my days, I would cheerfully wave them all. For the little fame that I have already earned has never saved me from one distressing night, or from one despairing day, since I first acquired it. *For* what I am reserved, or *to* what, is a mystery; I would fain hope, not merely that I may amuse others, or only to be a translator of Homer.

Sally Perry's case has given us much concern. I have no doubt that it is distemper. But distresses of mind, that are occasioned by distemper, are the most difficult of all to deal with. They refuse all consolation; they will hear no reason. God only, by his own immediate impressions, can remove them; as, after an experience of thirteen years' misery, I can abundantly testify. Yours, WM. COWPER.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Jan. 18, 1787.

I HAVE been so much indisposed with the fever that I told you had seized me, my nights during the whole week may be said to have been almost sleepless. The consequence has been, that except the translation of about thirty lines at the conclusion of the thirteenth book, I have been forced to abandon

Homer entirely. This was a sensible mortification to me, as you may suppose, and felt the more because, my spirits of course failing with my strength, I seemed to have peculiar need of my old amusement. It seemed hard therefore to be forced to resign it just when I wanted it most. But Homer's battles cannot be fought by a man who does not sleep well, and who has not some little degree of animation in the day time. Last night, however, quite contrary to my expectations, the fever left me entirely, and I slept quietly, soundly, and long. If it please God that it return not, I shall soon find myself in a condition to proceed. I walk constantly, that is to say, Mrs. Unwin and I together; for at these times I keep her continually employed, and never suffer her to be absent from me many minutes. She gives me all her time, and all her attention, and forgets that there is another object in the world.

Mrs. Carter thinks on the subject of dreams as everybody else does, that is to say, according to her own experience. She has had no extraordinary ones, and therefore accounts them only the ordinary operations of the fancy. Mine are of a texture that will not suffer me to ascribe them to so inadequate a cause, or to any cause but the operation of an exterior agency. I have a mind, my dear, (and to you I will venture to boast of it) as free from superstition as any man living, neither do I give heed to dreams in general as predictive, though particular dreams I believe to be so. Some very sensible persons, and I suppose Mrs. Carter among them, will acknowledge that in old times God spoke by dreams, but affirm with much boldness that he has since ceased to do so. If you ask them why? they answer, because he has now revealed his will in the Scripture, and there is no longer any need that he should instruct or admonish us by dreams. I grant that with respect to doctrines and precepts he has left us in want of nothing; but has he thereby precluded himself in any of the operations of his Providence? Surely not. It is perfectly a different consideration; and the same need that there ever was of his interference in this way, there is still, and ever must be, while man continues blind and fallible, and a creature beset with dangers which he can neither foresee nor obviate. His operations however of this kind are, I allow, very rare; and as to the generality of dreams, they are made of such stuff, and are in themselves so

insignificant, that though I believe them all to be the manufacture of others, not our own, I account it not a farthing-matter who manufactures them. So much for dreams!

My fever is not yet gone, but sometimes seems to leave me. It is altogether of the nervous kind, and attended, now and then, with much dejection.

A young gentleman called here yesterday, who came six miles out of his way to see me. He was on a journey to London from Glasgow, having just left the university there. He came I suppose partly to satisfy his own curiosity, but chiefly, as it seemed, to bring me the thanks of some of the Scotch professors for my two volumes. His name is Rose, an Englishman. Your spirits being good, you will derive more pleasure from this incident than I can at present, therefore I send it. Adieu, very affectionately, W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

DEAR SIR, Weston, July 24, 1787.

THIS is the first time I have written these six months, and nothing but the constraint of obligation could induce me to write now. I cannot be so wanting to myself as not to endeavour at least to thank you both for the visits with which you have favoured me, and the poems that you sent me; in my present state of mind I taste nothing, nevertheless I read, partly from habit, and partly because it is the only thing that I am capable of.

I have therefore read Burns's poems, and have read them twice; and though they be written in a language that is new to me, and many of them on subjects much inferior to the author's ability, I think them on the whole a very extraordinary production. He is I believe the only poet these kingdoms have produced in the lower rank of life since Shakespeare, (I should rather say since Prior,) who need not be indebted for any part of his praise to a charitable consideration of his origin, and the disadvantages under which he has laboured. It will be pity if he should not hereafter divest himself of barbarism, and content himself with writing pure English, in which he appears perfectly qualified to excel. He who can command admiration, dishonours himself if he aims no higher than to raise a laugh.

I am, dear sir, with my best wishes for your prosperity, and with Mrs. Unwin's respects,

Your obliged and affectionate humble servant, W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

DEAR SIR, Weston, Aug. 27, 1787.

I HAVE not yet taken up the pen again, except to write to you. The little taste that I have had of your company, and your kindness in finding me out, make me wish that we were nearer neighbours, and that there were not so great a disparity in our years; that is to say, not that you were older, but that I were younger. Could we have met in early life, I flatter myself that we might have been more intimate than now we are likely to be. But you shall not find me slow to cultivate such a measure of your regard, as your friends of your own age can spare me. When your route shall lie through this country, I shall hope that the same kindness which has prompted you twice to call on me, will prompt you again, and I shall be happy if, on a future occasion, I may be able to give you a more cheerful reception than can be expected from an invalid. My health and spirits are considerably improved, and I once more associate with my neighbours. My head, however, has been the worst part of me, and still continues so,—is subject to giddiness and pain, maladies very unfavourable to poetical employment; but a preparation of the bark, which I take regularly, has so far been of service to me in those respects, as to encourage in me a hope that by perseverance in the use of it, I may possibly find myself qualified to resume the translation of Homer.

When I cannot walk, I read, and read perhaps more than is good for me. But I cannot be idle. The only mercy that I show myself in this respect is, that I read nothing that requires much closeness of application. I lately finished the perusal of a book, which in former years I have more than once attacked, but never till now conquered; some other book always interfered before I could finish it. The work I mean is Barclay's Argenis; and if ever you allow yourself to read for mere amusement, I can recommend it to you, (provided you have not already perused it,) as the most amusing romance that ever was written. It is the only one indeed of an old *date that* I ever had the patience to go through with. It is

interesting in a high degree; richer in incident than can be imagined, full of surprises, which the reader never forestalls, and yet free from all entanglement and confusion. The style too appears to me to be such as would not dishonour Tacitus himself.

Poor Burns loses much of his deserved praise in this country, through our ignorance of his language. I despair of meeting with any Englishman who will take the pains that I have taken to understand him. His candle is bright, but shut up in a dark lantern. I lent him to a very sensible neighbour of mine: but his uncouth dialect spoiled all; and before he had half read him through, he was quite *ram-feezled.*

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN The Lodge, Aug. 30, 1787.

THOUGH it costs me something to write, it would cost me more to be silent. My intercourse with my neighbours being renewed, I can no longer seem to forget how many reasons there are, why you especially should not be neglected,—no neighbour indeed, but the kindest of my friends, and ere long, I hope, an inmate.

My health and spirits seem to be mending daily: to what end I know not, neither will conjecture, but endeavour, as far as I can, to be content that they do so. I use exercise, and take the air in the park and wilderness: I read much, but as yet write not. Our friends at the Hall make themselves more and more amiable in our account, by treating us rather as old friends, than as friends newly acquired. There are few days in which we do not meet, and I am now almost as much at home in their house as in our own. Mr. Throckmorton, having long since put me in possession of all his ground, has now given me possession of his library: an acquisition of great value to me, who never have been able to live without books since I first knew my letters, and who have no books of my own. By his means I have been so well supplied, that I have not yet even looked at the Lounger, for which however I do not forget that I am obliged to you. *His* turn comes next, and I shall probably begin him to-morrow

Mr. George Throckmorton is at the Hall. I thought I had known these brothers long enough to have found out all their

talents and accomplishments; but I was mistaken. The day before yesterday, after having walked with us, they *carried* us up to the library, (a more accurate writer would have said, *conducted* us,) and then they showed me the contents of an immense port-folio, the work of their own hands. It was furnished with drawings of the architectural kind, executed in a most masterly manner, and among others, contained outside and inside views of the Pantheon,—I mean the Roman one. They were all, I believe, made at Rome. Some men may be estimated at a first interview, but the Throckmortons must be seen often, and known long, before one can understand all their value.

They often enquire after you, and ask me whether you visit Weston this autumn. I answer, yes; and I charge you, my dearest cousin, to authenticate my information. Write to me, and tell us when we may expect to see you. We were disappointed that we had no letter from you this morning. You will find me coated and buttoned according to your recommendation.

I write but little, because writing is become new to me; but I shall come on by degrees. Mrs. Unwin begs to be affectionately remembered to you. She is in tolerable health, which is the chief comfort here that I have to boast of.

Yours, my dearest cousin, as ever, W. C

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COZ, The Lodge, Sept. 4, 1737.

COME when thou canst come, secure of being always welcome! All that is here is thine, together with the hearts of those who dwell here. I am only sorry that your journey hither is necessarily postponed beyond the time when I did hope to have seen you; sorry too that my uncle's infirmities are the occasion of it. But years *will* have their course, and their effect; they are happiest, so far as this life is concerned, who like him escape those effects the longest, and who do not grow old before their time. Trouble and anguish do that for some, which only longevity does for others. A few months since I was older than your father is now, and though I have lately recovered, as Falstaff says, *some smatch of my youth*, I have but *little* confidence, in truth none, in so flattering a change, but

expect, *when I least expect it*, to wither again. The past is a pledge for the future.

Mr. G. is here, Mrs. Throckmorton's uncle. He is lately arrived from Italy, where he has resided several years, and is so much the gentleman, that it is impossible to be more so: sensible, polite, obliging; slender in his figure, and in manners most engaging,—every way worthy to be related to the Throckmortons.

I have read Savary's Travels into Egypt; Memoirs du Baron de Tott; Fenn's Original Letters; the Letters of Frederic of Bohemia; and am now reading Memoirs d'Henri de Lorraine, Duc de Guise. I have also read Barclay's Argenis, a Latin romance, and the best romance that ever was written. All these, together with Madan's Letters to Priestley, and several pamphlets, within these two months. So I am a great reader. W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Sept. 8, 1787.

I CONTINUE to write, as you perceive, my dearest cousin, though, in compassion for my pate, you advised me for the present to abstain:—in reality I have no need, at least I believe not, of any such caution. Those jarrings that made my scull feel like a broken egg-shell, and those twirls that I spoke of, have been removed by an infusion of the bark, which I have of late constantly applied to. I was blooded indeed, but to no purpose; for the whole complaint was owing to relaxation. But the apothecary recommended phlebotomy, in order to ascertain that matter; wisely suggesting that if I found no relief from bleeding, it would be a sufficient proof that weakness must necessarily be the cause. It is well when the head is chargeable with no weakness but what may be cured by an astringent.

Thanks to your choice, I wear the most elegant buttons in all this country: they have been much admired at the Hall. When my waistcoat is made I shall be quite accomplished. You have made us both happy by giving us a nearer prospect of your arrival. But Mrs. Unwin says you must not fix an early day for your departure, nor talk of staying only two or three weeks, because it will be a thorn that she shall lean upon all the *time that you are* here; and so say I. It is a comfort to

be informed when a visitor will go whom we wish to be rid of, but the reverse of a comfort, my cousin, when you are in the question.

Your last letter to Mrs. U. never came to hand; and as to the bed, it is so long since you supposed it sent that I fear it is altogether lost. You never mentioned it in any of your letters, therefore we did not look for it; its non-arrival would otherwise have been noticed. It is possible, however, that either the upholsterer, or the book-keeper at the inn, or the waggoner, may be able to give us some tidings of it. Woe be to them, careless knaves! if they have lost it among them!

The Throcks, as you observe, are Foxites; but their moderation in party matters is such, that in all the interviews we have had this summer, the string of politics has never been touched. Upon recollection, I must except a single instance, in which Peter Pindar, whose last piece Mr. Throckmorton lent me, furnished the occasion. But even then, though I took the opportunity of speaking my mind of that licentious lampooner of dignities very freely, we had no dispute. It was agreed on all hands to be great pity, considering the ill effect of such political ribaldry on the minds of the multitude, that the court has not stopped his mouth with a bribe;—nobody doubted that he would open it wide enough for the reception of a large one. How contemptible is wit so miserably misemployed!

I admire as much as you the spirit of our young minister. The Emperor and Pitt seem to be the two greatest names of the present age. They are both at present in circumstances that give them a noble opportunity to display their address, we shall soon see how they will acquit themselves. If they can manage their respective difficulties without bloodshed, they will each deserve a statue. I entirely agree with you that the ardour of youth under the control of wisdom, are the two essentials to make a good minister. Were the old Duke of Newcastle now at the helm, the French party in Holland would carry all before them, and the French court would pull us by the nose. Sir Thomas, therefore, was right in his opinion, as indeed he generally was,—and in political matters, I believe, always.

Our neighbours rejoice that you are coming, and desire me *to tell* you so. Mrs. Throckmorton walked with us yesterday *morning* to gather mushrooms.

We send you two brace of partridges;—one brace from them, and one brace a present from Mr. John Higgins.

With Mrs. U.'s affectionate respects,

Yours, my dear, ever, WM. COWPER.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, The Lodge, Sept. 15, 1787.

On Monday last I was invited to meet your friend Miss Jekyll at the Hall, and there we found her. Her good nature, her humorous manner, and her good sense, are charming; insomuch that even I, who was never much addicted to speech-making, and who at present find myself particularly indisposed to it, could not help saying at parting, I am glad that I have seen you, and sorry that I have seen so little of you. We were sometimes many in company: on Thursday we were fifteen, but we had not altogether so much vivacity and cleverness as Miss Jekyll, whose talent at mirth-making has this rare property to recommend it, that nobody suffers by it.

I am making a gravel walk for winter use, under a warm hedge in the orchard. It shall be furnished with a low seat for your accommodation, and if you do but like it I shall be satisfied. In wet weather, or rather after wet weather, when the street is dirty, it will suit you well, for lying on an easy declivity through its whole length, it must of course be immediately dry.

You are very much wished for by our friends at the Hall:—how much by me I will not tell you till the second week in October. Yours, W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Sept. 20, 1787.

For the more effectual abatement of your furious ire, my dearest coz, on the subject of these same partridges, it is expedient you should be told that we sent you only a *part* of the last present of that sort which we received from the Hall. Know also that when we found ourselves disposed to stew or to pot, we have an abundant supply of pigeons for those purposes from our neighbour's dove-cote, Mrs. Throck having given us the use of it at discretion. I know not by what coach they sent the basket which you never received, but I suppose by the Northampton coach. That it *was* sent is certain,

and when I answer a letter which I expect to receive from our fair neighbour soon, (for she has promised to write to us,) I will thank her on your behalf.

Rogers the Great has himself at last been spoken with about the bedstead. He expressed much concern for the loss of it, but at the same time was pretty positive that no such *meuble* had ever been conveyed to his warehouse in St. John Street. He thinks it must have been carried to some other inn, but promises to make enquiry when he goes next to London.

Miss J * * informed me that a conjugal connexion between herself and the Rev. Mr. * * * * having been proposed by * * * * * * * * *, she held it adviseable to mention the matter to me, that if I had any influence with that gentleman, I might employ it for the promotion of so desirable a purpose. I replied that she was the most fortunate of women in having directed her application in that instance to me, for that I had stronger interest with him than any body. I learned in the course of our conversation on the subject that she was principally enamoured of his *house*, for himself she had never seen. He does not visit at the Hall, and how it has happened that he does not I have never been able to learn, for of all the neighbouring clergy, he is in that respect almost a singular exception: it is an exception, however, that renders my interposition on the occasion the more expedient; and certain it is that for whatsoever name she should exchange her own, if the consequence might be her approximation to us, we should rejoice in it. He sent us yesterday a present of the finest perch that I have seen these seven years.

I read with much pleasure, my dear cousin, the account that you give of my uncle, his snug and calm way of living, the neatness of his little person, and the cheerfulness of his spirit. How happy is he at so advanced an age to have those with him whose chief delight is to entertain him, and to be susceptible as he is of being amused. Longevity, that in general either deprives a man of his friends, or if not of the power of enjoying their conversation, deals with *him* more gently, and still indulges him in the possession of those privileges which alone make life desirable. May he long continue to possess them! I acquiesce entirely in the justness of your *reasoning* on this subject, and must need confess that were I *your father*, I should with great reluctance resign you to the

demands of any cousin in the world. I shall be happy to see you, my dear, yet once again, but not till I can enjoy that happiness without the violation of any proprieties on your part,—not till he can spare you. Give my love to him, and tell him that I am not so much younger than he is, now, as I was when I saw him last. As years proceed, the difference between the elder and the younger is gradually reduced to nothing. But you will come; and in the mean time the rich and the poor rejoice in the expectation of you; to whom may be added a third sort,—ourselves for instance, who are of neither of those descriptions. Mrs. Unwin bids me present her love to you in the most affectionate terms, and says, Pray tell Lady Hesketh that all our featherbeds are used by turns.

I rejoice that Bully is so merry, and long to see him. Remember me kindly to Jocky. The *Marquis* is dead, and is succeeded by a *Beau*.—I received a letter yesterday, enclosing a Bank-note, and copy it for your edification:—

SIR,

A friend of yours, hearing where you reside, begs your acceptance of a ten pound note.

I am, sir, &c.

Est ce par hazard le Monsieur Dalling dont vous m'avez jadis fait le récit?

Yours, my beloved cousin, WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston Underwood, Sept. 22, 1787.

NOT well but better. I take an early opportunity to tell you that I am so. Perhaps I might have sent you a more satisfactory account of myself, had I postponed my letter yet a season; but Mrs. Unwin having engaged for that I should write to you *myself* as soon as I should find myself able to do so, and my inclination prompting me to do it likewise, here I am! When I saw you I could not speak to you; now I can write to you, an alteration at least so much for the better as will serve to gratify the kindness of your feelings for me, and therefore you have a right to know it.

It would be better with me than it is, were I capable of resuming my occupation in the plains of Troy. But at present I do not feel myself free for that service. In the last year I

seem to have lived twenty years. While I was busied in that work I seemed secure of bringing it to a conclusion. At the present moment life appears so short as not to afford me half scope enough for the undertaking. If my views in this respect should alter, I shall return to my work with pleasure, and in the mean time instead of producing any thing myself, must have recourse for amusement to the works of others. So it fares with mankind in general. We have not judgement or strength of mind for an arduous enterprise till two thirds of our allotted time are spent, and then, if through any infirmity of mind or body we happen to be thrown back, the remainder is too short to allow the hope of recovering the ground that we have lost. To reach the goal a man must have eyes to see it; but as for me I have no prospect. WM. COWPER.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAR COZ, The Lodge, Sept. 29, 1787.

I THANK you for your political intelligence; retired as we are, and seemingly excluded from the world, we are not indifferent to what passes in it; on the contrary, the arrival of a newspaper at the present juncture, never fails to furnish us with a theme for discussion, short indeed but satisfactory, for we seldom differ in opinion.

I have received such an impression of the Turks from the memoirs of Baron de Tott, which I read lately, that I can hardly help presaging the conquest of that empire by the Russians. The disciples of Mahomet are such babies in modern tactics, and so enervated by the use of their favourite drug; so fatally secure in their predestinarian dream, and so prone to a spirit of mutiny against their leaders, that nothing less can be expected. In fact, they had not been their own masters at this day had but the Russians known the weakness of their enemies half so well as they undoubtedly know it now. Add to this, that there is a popular prophecy current in both countries, that Turkey is one day to fall under the Russian sceptre. A prophecy which, from whatever authority it be derived, as it will naturally encourage the Russians and dispirit the Turks, in exact proportion to the degree of credit it has obtained on both sides, has a direct tendency to effect its own accomplishment. In the mean time, if I wish them conquered, it is only *because* I think it will be a blessing to them to be governed by

any other hand than their own. For under heaven has there never been a throne so execrably tyrannical as theirs. The heads of the innocent that have been cut off to gratify the humour or caprice of their tyrants, could they be all collected and discharged against the walls of their city, would not leave one stone on another.

O that you were here this beautiful day! It is too fine by half to be spent in London. I have a perpetual din in my head, and, though I am not deaf, hear nothing aright, neither my own voice, nor that of others. I am under a tub, from which tub accept my best love. Yours, W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston Underwood, Oct. 2, 1787.

After a long but necessary interruption of our correspondence, I return to it again, in one respect, at least, better qualified for it than before; I mean by a belief of your identity, which for thirteen years I did not believe. The acquisition of this light, if light it may be called which leaves me as much in the dark as ever on the most interesting subjects, releases me however from the disagreeable suspicion that I am addressing myself to you as the friend whom I loved and valued so highly in my better days, while in fact you are not that friend, but a stranger. I can now write to you without seeming to act a part, and without having any need to charge myself with dissimulation;—a charge from which, in that state of mind and under such an uncomfortable persuasion, I knew not how to exculpate myself, and which, as you will easily conceive, not seldom made my correspondence with you a burthen. Still, indeed, it wants, and is likely to want, that best ingredient which can alone make it truly pleasant either to myself or you—that spirituality which once enlivened all our intercourse. You will tell me, no doubt, that the knowledge I have gained is an earnest of more and more valuable information, and that the dispersion of the clouds in part, promises, in due time, their complete dispersion. I should be happy to believe it; but the power to do so is at present far from me. Never was the mind of man benighted to the degree that mine has been. The storms that have assailed me would have overset the faith of every man that ever had any; and the very

remembrance of them, even after they have been long passed by, makes hope impossible.

Mrs. Unwin, whose poor bark is still held together, though shattered by being tossed and agitated so long at the side of mine, does not forget yours and Mrs. Newton's kindness on this last occasion. Mrs. Newton's offer to come to her assistance, and your readiness to have rendered us the same service, could you have hoped for any salutary effect of your presence, neither Mrs. Unwin nor myself undervalue, nor shall presently forget. But you judged right when you supposed, that even your company would have been no relief to me; the company of my father or my brother, could they have returned from the dead to visit me, would have been none to me.

We are busied in preparing for the reception of Lady Hesketh, whom we expect here shortly. We have beds to put up, and furniture for beds to make; workmen, and scouring, and bustle. Mrs. Unwin's time has, of course, been lately occupied to a degree that made writing to her impracticable; and she excused herself the rather, knowing my intentions to take her office. It does not, however, suit me to write much at a time. This last tempest has left my nerves in a worse condition than it found them; my head, especially, though better informed, is more infirm than ever. I will, therefore, only add our joint love to yourself and Mrs. Newton, and that I am, my dear friend,

Your affectionate, WM. COWPER.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, The Lodge, Oct. 5, 1787.

My uncle's commendation of my hand-writing was the more agreeable to me as I have seldom received any on that subject. I write generally in the helter-skelter way, concerning myself about nothing more than to be legible. I am sorry for his deafness, which I hope however, by this time, the doctor and the doctor's engine have removed. It is well if he is cheerful under that malady, which oppresses the spirits of most men more than any other disorder that is not accompanied with pain. We have but few senses, and can spare none of them without much inconvenience. But I know that when my uncle's spirits are good, they are proof against all oppression.

Mrs. Throck. has not written to me, and now will not. Mr. Gregson had a letter from one of them to-day, in which they send compliments to us, and tell us they will be at home on Tuesday. How should she find time to write to me, who has been visiting her brother, one of the gayest young men in the world, who is building a great house, and has one of the finest pieces of water in England, with thirty boats on it? I am sorry to hear that his youth, and his riches together, bid fair to ruin him,—that he is a prey to his neighbours, plays deep, and consequently cannot be rich long. Excessive good-nature is a quality attended with so much danger to a young man, that, amiable as it is, one cannot help pitying the man that owns it.

Mrs. Chester paid her first visit here last Saturday, a prelude, no doubt, to the visit that she intends to you. I was angry with her for her omission of a civility to which you are so highly entitled; but now that she discovers symptoms of repentance, feel myself inclined to pardon her. She is one of those women, indeed, to whom one pardons every thing the moment they appear,—not handsome, but showing a gentleness in her countenance, voice, and manner, that speaks irresistibly in her favour.

Your newspaper, for which I thank you, my cousin, pleases me more than any that I have seen lately. The pertness of the Herald is my detestation, yet I always read it; and why? because it is a newspaper, and should therefore doubtless read it were it ten times more disgusting than it is. Fielding was the only man who ever attempted to be witty with success in a newspaper, and even he could not support it long. But he led the way in his Covent Garden Journal, and a thousand blockheads have followed him. I am not pleased, however, with that furious attack upon the poor Abbé Mann. The zealous Protestant who makes it, discovers too much of that spirit which he charges upon the Papists. The poor Abbé's narrative was in a manner extorted fro[illegible]m; and when I read it, instead of finding it insidious and [illegible]ile to the interests of the Church of England, I was foolis[illegible]enough to think it discreet, modest, temperate. The gentleman, therefore, has either more zeal, or a better nose at a plot, than I have.

The bedstead, my dear, suffered nothing by the long delay *and the bad lodging* that it met with: it could not have

looked better had it arrived at the time intended. It lost a screw indeed; but our neighbour the tailor happening to have an odd one exactly of the right size, supplied the deficiency. It will have its furniture to-morrow.

Poor Teedon, whom I dare say you remember, has never missed calling here once, and generally twice, a week since January last. The poor man has gratitude if he has not wit, and in the possession of that one good quality has a sufficient recommendation. I blame myself often for finding him tiresome, but cannot help it. My only comfort is that I should be more weary of thousands who have all the cleverness that has been denied to Teedon.

I have been reading Hanway's Travels, and of course the history of Nadir Shah, alias Kouli Khan—a hero! my dear,—and I am old enough to remember the time when he was accounted one. He built up pyramids of human heads, and had consequently many admirers. But he has found few, I imagine, in the world to which he is gone to give an account of his building. I have now just entered upon Baker's Chronicle, having never seen it in my life till I found it in the Hall library. It is a book at which you and I should have laughed immoderately, some years ago. It is equally wise and foolish, which makes the most ridiculous mixture in the world.

With Mrs. U.'s affectionate respects, my dearest cousin,

I am ever yours, WM. COWPER.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

DEAR SIR, Weston, Oct. 19, 1787.

A SUMMONS from Johnson, which I received yesterday, calls my attention once more to the business of translation. Before I begin I am willing to catch though but a short opportunity to acknowledge your last favour. The necessity of applying myself with all diligence to a long work that has been but too long interrupted, will make my opportunities of writing rare in future.

Air and exercise are necessary to all men, but particularly so to the man whose mind labours; and to him who has been all his life accustomed to much of both, they are necessary in the extreme. My time since we parted, has been devoted entirely to the recovery of health and strength for this service, and I am willing to hope with good effect. Ten months have passed

since I discontinued my poetical efforts; I do not expect to find the same readiness as before, till exercise of the neglected faculty, such as it is, shall have restored it to me.

You find yourself, I hope, by this time as comfortably situated in your new abode, as in a new abode one can be. I enter perfectly into all your feelings on occasion of the change. A sensible mind cannot do violence even to a local attachment without much pain. When my father died I was young, too young to have reflected much. He was Rector of Berkhamstead, and there I was born. It had never occurred to me that a parson has no fee-simple in the house and glebe he occupies. There was neither tree, nor gate, nor stile, in all that country, to which I did not feel a relation, and the house itself I preferred to a palace. I was sent for from London to attend him in his last illness, and he died just before I arrived. Then, and not till then, I felt for the first time that I and my native place were disunited for ever. I sighed a long adieu to fields and woods, from which I once thought I should never be parted, and was at no time so sensible of their beauties, as just when I left them all behind me, to return no more.

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Oct. 20, 1787.

My indisposition could not be of a worse kind. Had I been afflicted with a fever, or confined by a broken bone, neither of these cases would have made it impossible that we should meet. I am truly sorry that the impediment was insurmountable while it lasted, for such in fact it was. The sight of any face except Mrs. Unwin's, was to me an insupportable grievance; and when it has happened that by *forcing* himself into my hiding-place, some friend has found me out, he has had no great cause to exult in his success, as Mr. Bull can tell you. From this dreadful condition of mind I emerged suddenly; so suddenly, that Mrs. Unwin, having no notice of such a change herself, could give none to any body; and when it obtained, how long it might last, or how far it was to be depended on, was a matter of the greatest uncertainty. It affects me on the recollection with the more concern, because I learn from your last, that I have not only lost an interview with you myself, but have stood in the way of visits that you would have gladly

paid to others, and who would have been happy to have seen you. You should have forgotten, (but you are not good at forgetting your friends,) that such a creature as myself existed.

It has happened indeed, and by means that it was not possible for us to prevent, that our chambers have not had beds in them till within this fortnight. Lady Hesketh undertook to furnish them for us, and by a strange blunder of the people at the inn, or of the waggoner, the materials that she sent for the purpose, remained almost a twelvemonth in the warehouse. She ordered them hither without mentioning that she had done it in any of her letters to Mrs. Unwin, who wondered indeed that they did not come, but could not decently take any notice of their non-arrival.

I rejoice that Mrs. Cowper has been so comfortably supported. She must have severely felt the loss of her son. She has an affectionate heart toward her children, and could not but be sensible of the bitterness of such a cup. But God's presence sweetens every bitter. Desertion is the only evil that a Christian cannot bear.

I have done a deed for which I find some people thank me little. Perhaps I have only burned my fingers, and had better not have meddled. Last Sunday se'nnight I drew up a petition to Lord Dartmouth, in behalf of Mr. Postlethwaite. We signed it, and all the principal inhabitants of Weston followed our example. What we had done was soon known in Olney, and an evening or two ago, Mr. Raban called here, to inform me, (for that seemed to be his errand,) how little the measure that I had taken was relished by some of his neighbours. I vindicated my proceeding on the principles of justice and mercy to a laborious and well-deserving minister, to whom I had the satisfaction to find that none could allege one serious objection, and that all, except one, who objected at all, are persons who in reality ought to have no vote upon such a question. The affair seems still to remain undecided. If his Lordship waits, which I a little suspect, till his steward shall have taken the sense of those with whom he is likely to converse upon the subject, and means to be determined by his report, Mr. Postlethwaite's case is desperate.

I beg that you will remember me affectionately to Mr. Bacon. We rejoice in Mrs. Newton's amended health, and when we can

hear that she is restored, shall rejoice still more. The next summer may prove more propitious to us than the past: if it should, we shall be happy to receive you and yours. Mrs. Unwin unites with me in love to you all three. She is tolerably well, and her writing was prevented by nothing but her expectation that I should soon do it myself. Ever yours, W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH, NEW NORFOLK STREET, GROSVENOR SQUARE, LONDON.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, The Lodge, Saturday, Oct. 27, 1787.

Now that there is something like a time appointed, I feel myself a little more at my ease. Days and weeks slide imperceptibly away; November is just at hand, and the half of it, as you observe, will soon be over. Then, no impediment intervening, we shall meet once more,—a happiness of which I so lately despaired. My uncle, who so kindly spared you before, will I doubt not spare you again. He knows that a little frisk in country air will be serviceable to you, and even to my welfare, which is not a little concerned in the matter, I am persuaded he is not indifferent. For this and for many other reasons I ardently wish that he may enjoy and long enjoy the present measure of health, with which he is favoured. Our wants are included within the compass of two items. *I* want a watch-string, and we *both* are in want of certain things, called candle-ends, but of wax, not *tallow-fats*. Those with which you furnished us at Olney are not quite expended indeed, but are drawing near to their dissolution. Should I after farther scrutiny discover any other deficiencies, you shall know them.

You need not, my dear, be under any apprehensions lest I should too soon engage again in the translation of Homer. My health and strength of spirits for this service are, I believe, exactly in *statu quo prius*. But Mrs. Unwin having enlarged upon this head, I will therefore say the less. Whether I shall live to finish it, or whether, if I should, I shall live to enjoy any fruit of my labours, are articles in my account of such extreme uncertainty, that I feel them often operate as no small discouragement. But uncertain as these things are, I yet consider the employment *essential* to my present well-being, and pursue it accordingly. But had Pope been subject to the same alarming speculations, had he waking and sleeping dreamt as I do, I am inclined to think he would not have been my prede-

cessor in these labours; for I compliment myself with a persuasion that I have more heroic valour, of the passive kind at least, than he had,—perhaps than any man; it would be strange had I not, after so much exercise.

By some accident or other it comes to pass that I see the Throckmortons daily. Yesterday, soon after I had received your letter, I met them armed with bow and arrows, going to practise at the target in the garden. I consulted them on the subject of the best road from Newport hither, and the prevailing opinion was in favour of the road through Emberton. It is rough, indeed, but not so heavy as the road by Gayhurst. Mrs. Throck, anxious to put the matter past all doubt, cut a caper on the grass-plot, and said she would go ride to Olney immediately on purpose to examine the road. If her report contains any thing material, you shall hear it..

By *their* means I hear of Mrs. W * * daily. Their account of her yesterday was, that she begins to eat, and is somewhat more recollected. Dr. Kerr, I believe, is *now* pretty confident of her recovery. But it has been a terrible malady.

I rejoice, my dear, that you have such a Cadwallader. Silent and sober is exactly the character of our household; we shall be as harmonious as any thing so noiseless can be.

I thank you for the Prologue. There are, as you say, some good lines in it; and *so* good, that it is pity they have not a better ending. But the distinction between *Praise* and *Applause*, is too fine for an ordinary apprehension.

In a letter that I received yesterday from the General, he tells me that my MSS. are all safe: a piece of intelligence that refreshed me much. For missing some books that I did not remember to have sent, I began to be in no small *quandary*. I expect in a few days the old box brimful of heroics.

Farewell, my dearest coz.! the month that you speak of will be short indeed, unless you can contrive to lengthen it.

Ever yours, WM. COWPER.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Nov. 3, 1787.

SUFFER not thyself, my dearest coz., to be seduced from thy purpose. There are those among thy friends and kindred who being covetous of thy company will endeavour to keep thee *near them*, and the better to effect their machinations, will pos-

sess thee, if they can, with many megrims concerning the roads and the season of the year. But heed them not. They only do what I should do myself were I in their predicament, who certainly should not fail, for my own sake, to represent your intended journey as an enterprise rather to be admired than approved—more bold than prudent. The turnpike, as you well know, will facilitate your progress every inch of the way till you come to Sherrington, and from Sherrington hither you will find the way equally safe, though undoubtedly a little rough. Rough it was when you were here, such it is still, but not rougher than then, nor will it be so. The reason is this—that the soil being naturally a rock is very little, or rather not at all affected by the season, for as thou well knowest, no showers will melt a stone. The distance also from Sherrington toll-gate to our door is but four miles and a quarter. The only reason why I do not recommend the back road rather than this, is because it is apt to be heavy; in other respects it deserves the preference, for it is just as safe as the other, and from the turning at Gayhurst, is shorter than that by a mile and a half. The Throcks travel them both continually, and so do all the chaises and coaches in the country, and I never heard of an accident to any of them in all the twenty years that I have lived in it. Mr. and Mrs. Throck., understanding that you are a little apprehensive on this subject, begged me yesterday evening to tell you that *they* will send their servant to meet you at Newport, who will direct your *cocher* to all the best and most commodious quarters. As to the season of the year, I grant that it is November. It would be but folly to deny it. But what then?—Does not the sun shine in November? One would imagine that it did not, could not, or would not, were we to listen only to the suggestions of certain persons. But, my dear, the matter is far otherwise; nay it is even just the reverse; for he not only shines, but with such splendour too, that I write at this moment in a room heated by his beams, and with the curtain at my side let down on purpose to abate their fervour. Then let November have its just praise, and let not my cousin fear to find the country pleasant even now. I have said it in verse, and I think it in prose, that as it is at all times preferable to the town, so is it especially preferable in winter, provided I mean that you have gravel to walk upon, of which there is no scarcity at Weston.

Coming home from my walk yesterday I met Mr. Throck.,

on his return from Gayhurst. I was glad that I had so good an opportunity to inform myself concerning Mrs. W * *. His account of her was in some respects favourable, but upon the whole not flattering. She eats, it is true, and knows those about her; but she almost keeps her bed, is torpid, and inattentive to all that passes, and can hardly be prevailed with to speak, unless constrained to it. Dr. Kerr professes himself perfectly master of her case, but I have more than once heard some wonder expressed that they have not called in other assistance. The present is an unfortunate period in that family: three or four days since, Mr. W * * had a terrible fall from his horse. He was fox-hunting; and in Yardley Chase, the hounds chose to follow the deer. He rode violently to whip them off, when his horse plunged into a slough, pitched him over his head, and fell upon him. The softness of the ground saved him, but he was much hurt in both shoulders, and is now suffering by a fit of the gout, which the fall has brought upon him. Mr. Throck. and Mrs. Throck.'s brother, who is now at the Hall, happened to see him thrown, and very humanely assisted him to mount again, which without their help he could never have done. The rest of the company were too much fox-hunters to trouble themselves at all about him.

Many thanks, my dear cousin, both on Mrs. Unwin's part and mine for the gown you have purchased for her. She is even now proud of it, and will be prouder still when she shall put it on. I shall be glad of the paper; not that I am in immediate want, but it is good to be provided. I shall put the fourteenth Iliad into Mrs. Throck.'s hands in a day or two: I am at present only employed by blots and obliterations in making it more difficult for her to decipher.

Adieu, my dear. Our best love, and best wishes are always with you. Yours affectionately, WM. COWPER.

I hear of three prints lately published. Two of Crazy Kate, and one of the Lacemaker in "Truth." Mr. Wm. T———n has said that he will send them to me.

I rejoice that we have peace, at least a respite from war. But you do well to suspect the French of a double meaning, *or even* of a treble one if that be possible. I believe they mean *nothing* so little, as to be honest.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Nov. 10, 1787.

THE parliament, my dearest cousin, prorogued continually, is a meteor dancing before my eyes, promising me my wish only to disappoint me, and none but the king and his ministers can tell when you and I shall come together. I hope however that the period, though so often postponed, is not far distant, and that once more I shall behold you, and experience your power to make winter gay and sprightly.

I have a kitten, my dear, the drollest of all creatures that ever wore a cat's skin. Her gambols are not to be described, and would be incredible, if they could. In point of size she is likely to be a kitten always, being extremely small of her age, but time I suppose, that spoils every thing, will make her also a cat. You will see her I hope before that melancholy period shall arrive, for no wisdom that she may gain by experience and reflection hereafter, will compensate the loss of her present hilarity. She is dressed in a tortoise-shell suit, and I know that you will delight in her.

Mrs. Throckmorton carries us to-morrow in her chaise to Chicheley. The event however must be supposed to depend on elements, at least on the state of the atmosphere, which is turbulent beyond measure. Yesterday it thundered, last night it lightened, and at three this morning I saw the sky as red as a city in flames could have made it. I have a leech in a bottle that foretells all these prodigies and convulsions of nature: no, not as you will naturally conjecture by articulate utterance of oracular notices, but by a variety of gesticulations, which here I have not room to give an account of. Suffice it to say, that no change of weather surprises him, and that in point of the earliest and most accurate intelligence, he is worth all the barometers in the world. None of them all indeed can make the least pretence to foretell thunder—a species of capacity of which he has given the most unequivocal evidence. I gave but sixpence for him, which is a groat more than the market price, though he is in fact, or rather would be, if leeches were not found in every ditch, an invaluable acquisition. W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Nov. 16, 1787.

I THANK you for the solicitude that you express on the subject of my present studies. The work is undoubtedly long and laborious, but it has an end, and proceeding leisurely, with a due attention to the use of air and exercise, it is possible that I may live to finish it, Assure yourself of one thing, that though to a by-stander it may seem an occupation surpassing the powers of a constitution never very athletic, and, at present, not a little the worse for wear, I can invent for myself no employment that does not exhaust my spirits more. I will not pretend to account for this, I will only say that it is not the language of predilection for a favourite amusement, but that the fact is really so. I have even found that those play-thing-avocations, which one may execute almost without any attention, fatigue me, and wear me away, while such as engage me much, and attach me closely, are rather serviceable to me than otherwise. W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, Weston Lodge, Nov. 17, 1787.

WE are therefore not to meet before Christmas. There is a combination of King, Lords, and Commons against it, and we must submit. I do it with an ill grace, but in a corner; and nobody—not even yourself, shall know with how much reluctance. In consideration of the necessity there is, that should you come on this side Christmas you must return immediately after the holidays, on account of those three limbs of the legislature coming together again, I am so far well content that your journey hither should be postponed till your continuance here shall be less liable to interruption; and I console myself in the mean time with frequent recollections of that passage in your letter, in which you speak of frequent visits to Weston. This is a comfort on which I have only one drawback; and it is the reflection that I make without being able to help it, on the style and nature of my constant experience, which has taught me that what I hope for with most pleasure, is the very thing in which I am most likely to meet with a disappointment;—but sufficient to the past is the evil thereof; let futurity speak for itself.

On Monday last—for headaches and other matters, prevented

our going sooner, Mrs. Throck. carried us to Chicheley, viz. Mr. Chester's. It seemed as if all the world was there to meet us, though in fact there was not above half of it, their own family, which is very numerous, excepted. The Bishop of Norwich was there, that is to say, the little Doctor Lewis Bagot, and his lady. She is handsome, and he in all respects what a Bishop should be. Besides these, Mrs. Praed was there, and her sister, Miss Backwell. There might be many others, but if there were, I overlooked them. Foresaid little Bishop and I had much talk about many things, but most about Homer. I have not room to particularize, and will therefore sum up the whole with observing, that both with respect to our ideas of the original, of Pope's translation, and of the sort of translation that is wanted, we were perfectly at an agreement. As to the house, it is handsome, so is the pleasure-ground, and so are all the gardens, which are not less, I believe, than four in number. With respect to the family themselves, they are all amiable, and our visit was a very agreeable one.

We sent over to Olney this morning to enquire after the hamper; but the answer of Rogers was, that he and his book-keeper had searched the warehouse for parcels directed hither, but could find none. Either, therefore, something prevented your sending it at the time you mentioned, or it must have reached the inn too late, in which case we shall have it by the next waggon.

I write both to the General and to Mr. Hill by this post, the latter advises me to abstain from Homer, but I might as well advise him to abstain from parchment.

My dearest—farewell. Thine ever, WM. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Nov. 27, 1787.

It is the part of wisdom, my dearest cousin, to sit down contented under the demands of necessity, because they are such. I am sensible that you cannot in my uncle's present infirm state, and of which it is not possible to expect any considerable amendment, indulge either us, or yourself, with a journey to Weston. Yourself I say, both because I know it will give you pleasure to see *Causidice mi*[1] once more, especially in the

[1] *The appellation which* Sir Thomas Hesketh used to give him in jest, *when he was of the Temple.*

comfortable abode where you have placed him, and because after so long an imprisonment in London, you who love the country and have a taste for it, would of course be glad to return to it. For my own part, to me it is ever new, and though I have now been an inhabitant of this village a twelvemonth, and have during the half of that time been at liberty to expatiate, and to make discoveries, I am daily finding out fresh scenes and walks, which you would never be satisfied with enjoying; —some of them are unapproachable by you either on foot or in your carriage. Had you twenty toes (whereas I suppose you have but ten) you could not reach them; and coach wheels have never been seen there since the flood. Before it indeed, (as Burnet says that the earth was then perfectly free from all inequalities in its surface,) they might have been seen there every day. We have other walks both upon hill tops and in valleys beneath, some of which by the help of your carriage, and many of them without its help, would be always at your command.

On Monday morning last, Sam brought me word that there was a man in the kitchen who desired to speak with me. I ordered him in. A plain, decent, elderly figure made its appearance, and being desired to sit, spoke as follows: "Sir, I am clerk of the parish of All-Saints, in Northampton; brother of Mr. Cox the upholsterer. It is customary for the person in my office to annex to a bill of mortality, which he publishes at Christmas, a copy of verses. You would do me a great favour, Sir, if you would furnish me with one." To this, I replied. "Mr. Cox, you have several men of genius in your town, why have you not applied to some of them? There is a namesake of yours in particular, Cox the statuary, who, every body knows, is a first-rate maker of verses. He surely is the man of all the world for your purpose."—"Alas! Sir, I have heretofore borrowed help from him, but he is a gentleman of so much reading, that the people of our town cannot understand him." I confess to you, my dear, I felt all the force of the compliment implied in this speech, and was almost ready to answer, Perhaps, my good friend, they may find me unintelligible too for the same reason. But on asking him whether he had walked over to Weston on purpose to implore the assistance of my Muse, and on his replying in the affirmative, I felt my mortified vanity a little consoled, and pitying

the poor man's distress which appeared to be considerable, promised to supply him. The waggon has accordingly gone this day to Northampton loaded in part with my effusions in the mortuary style. A fig for poets who write epitaphs upon individuals! I have written *one*, that serves *two hundred* persons.

A few days since, I received a second very obliging letter from Mr. Mackenzie. He tells me that his own papers, which are by far, he is sorry to say it, the most numerous, are marked V. I. Z. Accordingly, my dear, I am happy to find that I am engaged in a correspondence with Mr. Viz, a gentleman for whom I have always entertained the profoundest veneration. But the serious fact is, that the papers distinguished by those signatures have ever pleased me most, and struck me as the work of a sensible man, who knows the world well, and has more of Addison's delicate humour than any body.

A poor man begged food at the Hall lately. The cook gave him some vermicelli soup. He ladled it about sometime with the spoon, and then returned it to her, saying, "I am a poor man it is true, and I am very hungry, but yet I cannot eat broth with maggots in it." Once more, my dear, a thousand thanks for your box full of good things, useful things, and beautiful things. Yours ever, W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Dec. 4, 1787.

I AM glad, my dearest Coz, that my last letter proved so diverting. You may assure youself of the literal truth of the whole narration, and that however droll, it was not in the least indebted to any embellishments of mine.

You say well, my dear, that in Mr. Throckmorton, we have a peerless neighbour; we have so. In point of information upon all important subjects, in respect too of expression and address, and in short, every thing that enters into the idea of a gentleman, I have not found his equal, not often, any where. Were I asked who in my judgement approaches nearest to him in all his amiable qualities and qualifications, I should certainly answer his brother George, who if he be not his exact counterpart, endued with precisely the same measure *of the same accomplishments*, is nevertheless deficient in none

of them, and is of a character singularly agreeable, in respect of a certain manly, I had almost said, heroic frankness, with which his air strikes one almost immediately. So far as his opportunities have gone, he has ever been as friendly and obliging to us as we could wish him, and were he lord of the Hall to-morrow, would I dare say conduct himself towards us in such a manner, as to leave us as little sensible as possible of the removal of its present owners. But all this I say, my dear, merely for the sake of stating the matter as it is; not in order to obviate, or to prove the inexpedience of any future plans of yours, concerning the place of our residence. Providence and time shape every thing; I should rather say Providence alone, for time has often no hand in the wonderful changes that we experience; they take place in a moment. It is not therefore worth while perhaps to consider much what we will or will not do in years to come, concerning which all that I can say with certainty at present is, that those years will be to me the most welcome, in which I can see the most of you. W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston, Dec. 6, 1787.

A SHORT time since, by the help of Mrs. Throckmorton's chaise, Mrs. Unwin and I reached Chicheley. "Now," said I to Mrs. Chester, "I shall write boldly to your brother Walter, and will do it immediately. I have passed the gulf that parted us, and he will be glad to hear it." But let not the man who translates Homer be so presumptuous as to have a will of his own, or to promise any thing. A fortnight, I suppose, has elapsed since I paid this visit, and I am only now beginning to fulfil what I then undertook to accomplish without delay. The old Grecian must answer for it.

I spent my morning there so agreeably, that I have ever since regretted more sensibly, that there are five miles of a dirty country interposed between us. For the increase of my pleasure, I had the good fortune to find your brother the Bishop there. We had much talk about many things, but most, I believe, about Homer; and great satisfaction it gave me to find, that on the most important points of that subject his Lordship and I were exactly of one mind. In the course of our conversation he produced from his pocket-book a translation of the first ten or twelve lines of the Iliad, and in order

to leave my judgement free, informed me kindly at the same time that they were not his own. I read them, and according to the best of my recollection of the original, found them well executed. The Bishop indeed acknowledged that they were not faultless, neither did I find them so. Had they been such, I should have felt their perfection as a discouragement hardly to be surmounted; for at that passage I have laboured more abundantly than at any other, and hitherto with the least success. I am convinced that Homer placed it at the threshold of his work as a scarecrow to all translators. Now, Walter, if thou knowest the author of this version, and it be not treason against thy brother's confidence in thy secrecy, declare him to me. Had I been so happy as to have seen the Bishop again before he left this country, I should certainly have asked him the question, having a curiosity upon the matter that is extremely troublesome.

The awkward situation in which you found yourself on receiving a visit from an authoress, whose works though presented to you long before, you had never read, made me laugh, and it was no sin against my friendship for you, to do so. It was a ridiculous distress, and I can laugh at it even now. I hope she catechised you well. How did you extricate yourself? Now laugh at me. The clerk of the parish of All Saints, in the town of Northampton, having occasion for a poet, has appointed me to the office. I found myself obliged to comply. The bellman comes next, and then, I think, though even borne upon your swan's quill, I can soar no higher!

I am, my dear friend, faithfully yours, W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Dec. 10, 1787.

I THANK you for the snip of cloth, commonly called a pattern. At present I have two coats, and but one back. If at any time hereafter I should find myself possessed of fewer coats, or more backs, it will be of use to me.

Even as you suspect, my dear, so it proved. The ball was prepared for, the ball was held, and the ball passed, and we had nothing to do with it. Mrs. Throckmorton, knowing our trim, did not give us the pain of an invitation, for a pain it would have been. And why? as Sternhold says,—because, as *Hopkins answers,* we must have refused it. But it fell out

singularly enough, that this ball was held, of all days in the year, on my birth day—and so I told them—but not till it was all over.

Though I have thought proper never to take any notice of the arrival of my MSS. together with the *other good things* in the box, yet certain it is, that I received them. I have furbished up the tenth book till it is as bright as silver, and am now occupied in bestowing the same labour upon the eleventh. The twelfth and thirteenth are in the hands of ——, and the fourteenth and fifteenth are ready to succeed them. This notable job is the delight of my heart, and how sorry shall I be when it is ended.

The smith and the carpenter, my dear, are both in the room, hanging a bell; if I therefore make a thousand blunders, let the said intruders answer for them all.

I thank you, my dear, for your history of the G—s. What changes in that family! And how many thousand families have in the same time experienced changes as violent as theirs! The course of a rapid river is the justest of all emblems, to express the variableness of our scene below. Shakspeare says, none ever bathed himself twice in the same stream, and it is equally true that the world upon which we close our eyes at night is never the same with that on which we open them in the morning.

I do not always say, give my love to my uncle, because he knows that I always love him. I do not always present Mrs. Unwin's love to you, partly for the same reason, (Deuce take the smith and the carpenter!) and partly because I forget it. But to present my own, I forget never, for I always have to finish my letter, which I know not how to do, my dearest coz, without telling you that I am.

Ever yours, W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

DEAR SIR, Weston, Dec. 13, 1787.

UNLESS my memory deceives me, I forewarned you that I should prove a very unpunctual correspondent. The work that lies before me engages unavoidably my whole attention. The length of it, the spirit of it, and the exactness that is requisite to its due performance, are so many most interesting subjects of consideration to me, who find that my best attempts

are only introductory to others, and that what to-day I suppose finished, to-morrow I must begin again. Thus it fares with a translator of Homer. To exhibit the majesty of such a poet in a modern language is a task that no man can estimate the difficulty of till he attempts it. To paraphrase him loosely, to hang him with trappings that do not belong to him, all this is comparatively easy. But to represent him with only his own ornaments, and still to preserve his dignity, is a labour that, if I hope in any measure to achieve it, I am sensible can only be achieved by the most assiduous and most unremitting attention. Our studies, however different in themselves, in respect of the means by which they are to be successfully carried on, bear some resemblance to each other. A perseverance that nothing can discourage, a minuteness of observation that suffers nothing to escape, and a determination not to be seduced from the straight line that lies before us, by any images with which fancy may present us, are essentials that should be common to us both. There are perhaps few arduous undertakings, that are not in fact more arduous than we at first supposed them. As we proceed, difficulties increase upon us, but our hopes gather strength also, and we conquer difficulties which, could we have foreseen them, we should never have had the boldness to encounter. May this be your experience, as I doubt not that it will. You possess by nature all that is necessary to success in the profession that you have chosen. What remains is in your own power. They say of poets, that they must be born such: so must mathematicians, so must great generals, and so must lawyers, and so indeed must men of all denominations, or it is not possible that they should excel. But with whatever faculties we are born, and to whatever studies our genius may direct us, studies they must still be. I am persuaded, that Milton did not write his Paradise Lost, nor Homer his Iliad, nor Newton his Principia, without immense labour. Nature gives them a bias to their respective pursuits, and that strong propensity, I suppose, is what we mean by genius. The rest they gave themselves. "*Macte esto,*" therefore, have no fears for the issue!

I have had a second kind letter from your friend Mr. ———, which I have just answered. I must not I find hope to see him here, at least I must not much expect it. He has a family that does not permit him to fly southward. I have also

a notion, that we three could spend a few days comfortably together, especially in a country like this, abounding in scenes with which I am sure you would both be delighted. Having lived till lately at some distance from the spot that I now inhabit, and having never been master of any sort of vehicle whatever, it is but just now that I begin myself to be acquainted with the beauties of our situation. To you I may hope, one time or other, to show them, and shall be happy to do it, when an opportunity offers.

Yours, most affectionately, W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Dec. 19, 1787 (in Post mark).

SATURDAY, my dearest cousin, was a day of receipts. In the morning I received a box filled with an abundant variety of stationery ware, containing, in particular, a quantity of paper sufficient, well covered with good writing, to immortalize any man. I have nothing to do, therefore, but to cover it as aforesaid, and my name will never die. In the evening I received a smaller box, but still more welcome on account of its contents. It contained an almanack in red morocco, a pencil of a new invention, called an everlasting pencil, and a noble purse, with a noble gift in it, called a Bank note for twenty-five pounds. I need use no arguments to assure you, my cousin, that by the help of ditto note, we shall be able to fadge very comfortably till Christmas is turned, without having the least occasion to draw upon you. By the post yesterday—that is, Sunday morning—I received also a letter from Anonymous, giving me advice of the kind present which I have just particularized; in which letter allusion is made to a certain piece by me composed, entitled, I believe, the Drop of Ink. The only copy I ever gave of that piece, I gave to yourself. It is *possible*, therefore, that between you and *Anonymous* there may be some communication. If that should be the case, I will beg you just to signify to him, as opportunity may occur, the safe arrival of his most acceptable present, and my most grateful sense of it.

My toothache is in a great measure, that is to say, almost entirely removed; not by snipping my ears, as poor Lady *Strange*'s ears were snipped, nor by any other chirurgical *operation*, except such as I could perform myself. The man-

ner of it was as follows: we dined last Thursday at the Hall; I sat down to table, trembling lest the tooth, of which I told you in my last, should not only refuse its own office, but hinder all the rest. Accordingly, in less than five minutes, by a hideous dislocation of it, I found myself not only in great pain, but under an absolute prohibition not only to eat, but to speak another word. Great emergencies sometimes meet the most effectual remedies. I resolved, if it were possible, then and there to draw it. This I effected so dexterously by a sudden twitch, and afterwards so dexterously conveyed it into my pocket, that no creature present, not even Mrs. Unwin, who sat facing me, was sensible either of my distress, or of the manner of my deliverance from it. I am poorer by one tooth than I was, but richer by the unimpeded use of all the rest.

When I lived in the Temple, I was rather intimate with a son of the late Admiral Rowley and a younger brother of the present Admiral. Since I wrote to you last, I received a letter from him, in a very friendly and affectionate style. It accompanied half a dozen books, which I had lent him five and twenty years ago, and which he apologized for having kept so long, telling me that they had been sent to him at Dublin by mistake; for at Dublin, it seems, he now resides. Reading my poems, he felt, he said, his friendship for me revive, and wrote accordingly. I have now, therefore, a correspondent in Ireland, another in Scotland, and a third in Wales. All this would be very diverting, had I a little more time to spare to them.

My dog, my dear is a spaniel. Till Miss Gunning begged him, he was the property of a farmer, and while he was their property had been accustomed to lie in the chimney corner, among the embers, till the hair was singed from his back, and till nothing was left of his tail but the gristle. Allowing for these disadvantages, he is really handsome; and when nature shall have furnished him with a new coat, a gift which, in consideration of the ragged condition of his old one, it is hoped she will not long delay, he will then be unrivalled in personal endowments by any dog in this country. He and my cat are excessively fond of each other, and play a thousand gambols together that it is impossible not to admire.

Know thou, that from this time forth, the post comes daily to Weston. This improvement is effected by an annual sub-

scription of ten shillings. The Throcks invited us to the measure, and we have acceded to it. Their servant will manage this concern for us at the Olney post office, and the subscription is to pay a man for stumping three times a week from Olney to Newport Pagnel, and back again.

Returning from my walk to-day, while I was passing by some small closes at the back of the town, I heard the voices of some persons extremely merry at the top of the hill. Advancing into the large field behind our house, I there met Mr. Throck, wife, and brother George. Combine in your imagination as large proportions as you can of earth and water intermingled so as to constitute what is commonly called mud, and you will have but an imperfect conception of the quantity that had attached itself to her petticoats: but she had half-boots, and laughed at her own figure. She told me that she had this morning transcribed sixteen pages of my Homer. I observed in reply, that to write so much, and to gather all that dirt, was no bad morning's work, considering the shortness of the days at this season. Yours, my dear, W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, The Lodge, Dec. 24, 1787.

THE Throcks do not leave Weston till after Easter. But this I hope will have no effect upon your movements, should an opportunity present itself to you of coming sooner. We dined there last Saturday. After dinner, while we all sat round the fire, I told them, as I related it to you, the adventure of my tooth. This drew from Mrs. Throck, (singular as it must appear,) a tale the very counterpart of mine. She, in like manner, had a tooth to draw, while I was drawing mine; and thus it came to pass (the world, I suppose, could not furnish such another instance) that we two, without the least intimation to each other of our respective distress, were employed in the same moment, sitting side by side, in drawing each a tooth: an operation which we performed with equal address, and without being perceived by any one.

This morning had very near been a tragical one to me, beyond all that have ever risen upon me. Mrs. Unwin rose as usual at seven o'clock; at eight she came to me, and showed *me her* bed-gown with a great piece burnt out of it. Having *lighted* her fire, which she always lights herself, she placed the

candle upon the hearth. In a few moments it occurred to her that, if it continued there, it might possibly set fire to her clothes, therefore she put it out. But in fact, though she had not the least suspicion of it, her clothes were on fire at that very time. She found herself uncommonly annoyed by smoke, such as brought the water into her eyes; supposing that some of the billets might lie too forward, she disposed them differently; but finding the smoke increase, and grow more troublesome, (for by this time the room was filled with it,) she cast her eye downward, and perceived not only her bed-gown, but her petticoat on fire. She had the presence of mind to gather them in her hand, and plunge them immediately into the basin, by which means the general conflagration of her person, which must have probably ensued in a few moments, was effectually prevented. Thus was that which I have often heard from the pulpit, and have often had occasion myself to observe, most clearly illustrated,—that, secure as we may sometimes seem to ourselves, we are in reality never so safe as to have no need of a superintending Providence. Danger can never be at a distance from creatures who dwell in houses of clay. Therefore take care of thyself, gentle Yahoo! and may a more vigilant than thou care for thee.

On the day when we dined as above mentioned at the Hall, Mrs. Throck had paid a morning visit at * * * *. When I enquired how she found Mrs. * * *, her account of her was as follows: "They say she is much better, but to judge by her looks and her manner, there is no ground to think so. She looks dreadfully, and talks in a rambling way without ceasing." If this be a just description of her, and I do not at all doubt it, I am afraid, poor woman! that she is far from well, notwithstanding all that the physician of minds has done for her. In effect there is but One who merits that title; and were all the frantic who have been restored to their reason to make a reasonable use of it, they would acknowledge that God, and not man, had cured them.

I thank you, my dear, for your intentions to furnish me, had I not been otherwise accommodated with one, with an everlasting pencil. You may yet perhaps, on some distant day, have an opportunity to fulfil those intentions, for "everlasting," as it is called, it is not such in point of duration; but claims the title on this account only, that in the using, it

perpetually works itself to a point, and never wants cutting. Otherwise it wastes and wears, as every thing made of earthly materials must.

When the Throcks happen to mention the chairs again, your directions shall be pursued. As to the balance due on the plate account, it was, before the purchase of the silk handkerchiefs, &c., either six pounds or six guineas—we cannot recollect which. With the remainder, whatever it shall be found to be, Mrs. Unwin will be obliged to you if you will give it in commission to Mrs. Eaton, to buy for her some muslin for aprons, of the sort that you wore when you were at Olney, viz. with cross stripes. She thinks you called it an English muslin. They must be ell and nail long. But at the same time it does not appear probable to either of us, that there should be money remaining in your hands sufficient for this purpose.

I forgot to tell you that my dog is spotted liver-colour and white, or rather white and chestnut. He is at present my pupil as well as dog, and just before I sat down to write I gave him a lesson in the science of fetch and carry. He performs with an animation past all conception, except your own, whose poor head will never forget Tinker. But I am now grown more reasonable, and never make such a dreadful din but when Beau and I are together. To teach him is necessary, in order that he may take the water, and *that* is necessary in order that he may be sweet in summer. Farewell, my dearest coz. I am, with Mrs. U.'s affections,

Ever thine, most truly, WM. COWPER.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Jan. 1, 1788.

Now for another story almost incredible! A story that would be quite such, if it was not certain that you give me credit for any thing. I have read the poem for the sake of which you sent the paper, and was much entertained by it. You think it perhaps, as very well you may, the only piece of that kind that was ever produced. It is indeed original, for I dare say Mr. Merry never saw mine; but certainly it is not unique. For most true it is, my dear, that ten years since, having a letter to write to a friend of mine, to whom I could write any thing, I filled a whole sheet with a composition, both in measure and in manner precisely similar. I have in vain searched for it.

It is either burnt or lost. Could I have found it, you would have had double postage to pay. For that one man in Italy, and another in England, who never saw each other, should stumble on a species of verse, in which no other man ever wrote (and I believe that to be the case,) and upon a style and manner too, of which, I suppose, that neither of them had ever seen an example, appears to me so extraordinary a fact, that I must have sent you mine, whatever it had cost you, and am really vexed that I cannot authenticate the story by producing a voucher. The measure I recollect to have been perfectly the same, and as to the manner, I am equally sure of that, and from this circumstance that Mrs. Unwin and I never laughed more at any production of mine, perhaps not even at John Gilpin. But for all this, my dear, you must, as I said, give me credit; for the thing itself is gone to that limbo of vanity, where alone, says Milton, things lost on earth are to be met with. Said limbo is, as you know, in the moon, whither I could not at present convey myself without a good deal of difficulty and inconvenience.

This morning being the morning of new year's day, I sent to the Hall a copy of verses, addressed to Mrs. Throckmorton, entitled the Wish, or the Poet's New Year's Gift. We dine there to-morrow, when, I suppose, I shall hear news of them. Their kindness is so great, and they seize with such eagerness every opportunity of doing all they think will please us, that I held myself almost in duty bound to treat them with this stroke of my profession.

The small pox has done, I believe, all that it has to do at Weston. Old folks, and even women with child, have been inoculated. We talk of our freedom, and some of us are free enough, but not the poor. Dependant as they are upon parish bounty, they are sometimes obliged to submit to impositions, which perhaps in France itself could hardly be paralleled. Can man or woman be said to be free, who is commanded to take a distemper, sometimes at least mortal, and in circumstances most likely to make it so? No circumstance whatever was permitted to exempt the inhabitants of Weston. The old as well as the young, and the pregnant as well as they who had only themselves within them, have been inoculated. Were I asked who is the most arbitrary sovereign on earth? I should

answer, neither the king of France, nor the Grand Signior, but an Overseer of the poor in England.

I am as heretofore occupied with Homer: my present occupation is the revisal of all I have done, viz. of the first fifteen books. I stand amazed at my own increasing dexterity in the business, being verily persuaded that, as far as I have gone, I have improved the work to double its former value.

That you may begin the new year and end it in all health and happiness, and many more when the present shall have been long an old one, is the ardent wish of Mrs. Unwin, and of yours, my dearest coz, most cordially, W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston, Jan. 5, 1788.

I THANK you for your information concerning the author of the translation of those lines. Had a man of less note and ability than Lord Bagot produced it, I should have been discouraged. As it is, I comfort myself with the thought, that even he accounted it an achievement worthy of his powers, and that even he found it difficult. Though I never had the honour to be known to his Lordship, I remember him well at Westminster, and the reputation in which he stood there. Since that time I have never seen him, except once, many years ago, in the House of Commons, when I heard him speak on the subject of a drainage bill better than any member there.

My first thirteen books have been criticised in London; have been by me accommodated to those criticisms, returned to London in their improved state, and sent back to Weston with an *imprimantur*. This would satisfy some poets less anxious than myself about what they expose in public; but it has not satisfied me. I am now revising them again by the light of my own critical taper, and make more alterations than at the first. But are they improvements? you will ask,—Is not the spirit of the work endangered by all this attention to correctness? I think and hope that it is not. Being well aware of the possibility of such a catastrophe, I guard particularly against it. Where I find that a servile adherence to the original would render the passage less animated than it should be, *I still*, as at the first allow myself a liberty. On all other *occasions* I prune with an unsparing hand, determined that

there shall not be found in the whole translation an idea that is not Homer's. My ambition is to produce the closest copy possible, and at the same time as harmonious as I know how to make it. This being my object, you will no longer think, if indeed you have thought it at all, that I am unnecessarily and over much industrious. The original surpasses every thing; it is of an immense length, is composed in the best language ever used upon earth, and deserves, indeed demands, all the labour that any translator, be he who he may, can possibly bestow on it. Of this I am sure, and your brother the good bishop is of the same mind, that, at present, mere English readers know no more of Homer in reality, than if he had never been translated. That consideration indeed it was which mainly induced me to the undertaking; and if after all, either through idleness, or dotage upon what I have already done, I leave it chargeable with the same incorrectness as my predecessors, or indeed with any other that I may be able to amend, I had better have amused myself otherwise. And you I know are of my opinion.

I send you the clerk's verses, of which I told you. They are very clerklike, as you will perceive. But plain truth in plain words seemed to me to be the *ne plus ultra* of composition on such an occasion. I might have attempted something very fine, but then the persons principally concerned, viz. my readers, would not have understood me. If it puts them in mind that they are mortal, its best end is answered.

My dear Walter, adieu! yours faithfully, W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COZ, The Lodge, Jan. 9, 1788.

It has happened that this day I have had a double share of exercise, and am in consequence a little too weary, and much too sleepy, to be able to write you a very entertaining epistle. In the morning, the sky was of a true January cast, gloomy as black clouds could make it; the wind was cold in the extreme, and now and then it rained. In defiance of all these difficulties I took my walk; not so long a walk indeed as I generally take, but long enough for the purposes that a walk is designed to answer. At my return, as I was crossing the grove in front of the Hall, I saw all the family coming forth to do as I had

done. I joined them, and added their walk to my own:—the effect is such as I have told you. But I will do my best.

We dined there yesterday. As soon as tea-time arrived, I ascended to the ladies, in the library. Mrs. Frog informed me that her husband at the end of the week, goes to London for a few days, leaving her at Weston. I replied—Then you must dine with us in his absence. (For it has been for some time a settled point, that when they are separated she shall do so.) She consented, but added, What is to become of George? —He shall dine with us too. But Mr. Frog, who has never dined with you yet, will be affronted.—No, he shall not, for when he returns we will ask him too.

And thus it has come to pass, my dear, that without any motion made toward it on our part, we find ourselves obliged to depart from our original resolve. I could not have answered otherwise than I did, without saying virtually,—"Pardon me, madam, we are always ready to partake of your good cheer, but as for our own, that we intend to keep to ourselves." We shall therefore now have occasion for the good things with which you have so plentifully furnished us, and now our knives and forks of the newest construction will come into service. Not that we intend to perform any extraordinary feats in the feast-making way; far from it. We shall measure ourselves and our own ability, not theirs; and shall consider what it becomes us to give, and them to be content with at our table. After all, we mean not to establish a regular interchange of invitations; neither, I suppose, do they. Our present purpose is to tell them, that whenever it will be convenient to them to take a dinner at the Lodge, we shall always rejoice to see them; and having in that general way discharged the duty that civility and reciprocal hospitality seem to demand from us, there to leave it.

I thought, my dear, having a very sagacious nose in such matters, that your reason for not having answered Mrs. Frog, was not perfectly and altogether sound. I determined therefore, unless she should repeat her question again, (the question, I mean, whether you had taken any notice in your letters to me, of a letter received from her,) to be myself silent upon the matter; having always observed that an excuse, which is *not* powerful enough to bear down all before it, does more *harm* than good; the peccadillo, whatever it be, which was

before only suspected, is thenceforth ascertained, and in effect acknowledged. It turned out as I expected: she said nothing, and I said nothing; and, I dare say, nothing more will be said of it hereafter.

My verses[1], such as they were, had at least the effect that I wished. They pleased her, him, and theirs, as far as their fame has hitherto extended. Her brother Gifford in particular, who is excessively attached to his sister, and who arrived at the Hall last Sunday, though he has never given the smallest hint that he knows aught about them, has signified to me sufficiently by his manner, that he has both seen them and is obliged. These remarks of mine should rather have followed than have gone before them; but I am writing to you, and it is no matter; you will be sure to view them with a partial eye, and that may be highly necessary.

Many thanks, my dear, for your kind intentions in the oyster way. My stomach being in point of digestion better than it has been these fourteen years, I am now able to eat them raw. They are more agreeable to me raw than cooked, in whatever manner, and will now therefore be doubly welcome.

Depend upon it as a certainty, that I shall never be found a contributor to an organ at Olney: I never mention that vagary of theirs but with disapprobation. It is not much, indeed, that I say concerning any of their proceedings: they are generally so absurd, that it is impossible to give an opinion of them without offending all the parish.

My dearest coz! Heaven bless thee. I have more to say had I room, but nothing with which I can so well occupy the scanty remnant before me, as the often repeated assurance, and always true, that I am ever most affectionately thine,

WM. COWPER.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Jan. 19, 1788.

When I have prose enough to fill my paper, which is always the case when I write to you, I cannot find in my heart to give a third part of it to verse. Yet this I must do, or I must make my packets more costly than worshipful, by doubling the postage upon you, which I should hold to be unreasonable. See then the true reason why I did not send you that same scribble-

[1] The Wish; or, the Poet's New Year's Gift.

ment till you desired it. The thought which naturally presents itself to me on all such occasions is this,—Is not your cousin coming? Why are you impatient? Will it not be time enough to show her your fine things when she arrives?

Fine things indeed I have few. He who has Homer to transcribe may be contented to do little else. As when an ass, being harnessed with ropes to a sand cart, drags with hanging ear his heavy burthen, neither filling the long echoing streets with his harmonious bray, nor throwing up his heels behind, frolicksome and airy, as asses less engaged are wont to do; so I, satisfied to find myself indispensably obliged to render into the best possible English metre eight and forty Greek books, of which the two finest poems in the world consist, account it quite sufficient, if I may at last achieve that labour; and seldom allow myself those pretty little vagaries, in which I should otherwise delight, and of which, if I should live long enough, I intend hereafter to enjoy my fill.

This is the reason, my dear cousin, if I may be permitted to call you so in the same breath with which I have uttered this truly heroic comparison,—this is the reason why I produce at present but a few occasional poems, and the preceding reason is that which may account satisfactorily enough for my withholding the very few that I do produce. A thought sometimes strikes me before I rise; if it runs readily into verse, and I can finish it before breakfast, it is well; otherwise it dies, and is forgotten; for all the subsequent hours are devoted to Homer.

The day before yesterday, I saw for the first time Bunbury's new print, the Propagation of a Lie. Mr. Throckmorton sent it for the amusement of our party. Bunbury sells humour by the yard, and is, I suppose, the first vender of it who ever did so. He cannot therefore be said to have humour without measure, (pardon a pun, my dear, from a man who has not made one before these forty years,) though he may certainly be said to be immeasurably droll.

The original thought is good, and the exemplification of it, in those very expressive figures, admirable. A poem on the same subject, displaying all that is displayed in those attitudes, and in those features, (for faces they can hardly be called) would be most excellent. The affinity of the two arts, viz. verse and painting, has been observed; possibly the happiest

illustration of it would be found, if some poet would ally himself to some draftsman, as Bunbury, and undertake to write every thing he should draw. Then let a musician be admitted of the party. He should compose the said poem, adapting notes to it exactly accommodated to the theme; so should the sister arts be proved to be indeed sisters, and the world die of laughing. W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Jan. 21, 1788.

YOUR last letter informed us that you were likely to be much occupied for some time in writing on a subject that must be interesting to a person of your feelings,—the Slave Trade. I was unwilling to interrupt your progress in so good a work, and have therefore enjoined myself a longer silence than I should otherwise have thought excusable; though, to say the truth, did not our once intimate fellowship in the things of God recur to my remembrance, and present me with something like a warrant for doing it, I should hardly prevail with myself to write at all. Letters such as mine, to a person of a character such as yours, are like snow in harvest; and you will say, that if I will send you a letter that you can answer, I shall make your part of the business easier than it is. This I would gladly do; but though I abhor a vacuum as much as Nature herself is said to do, yet a vacuum I am bound to feel of all such matter as may merit your perusal.

I expected that before this time I should have had the pleasure of seeing your friend Mr. Bean, but his stay in this country was so short, that it was hardly possible he should find an opportunity to call. I have not only heard a high character of that gentleman from yourself, whose opinion of men as well as of other matters, weighs more with me than any body's; but from two or three different persons likewise, not ill qualified to judge. From all that I have heard, both from you and them, I have every reason to expect that I shall find him both an agreeable and useful neighbour; and if he can be content with me, (for that seems doubtful, poet as I am, and now, alas! nothing more,) it seems certain that I shall be highly satisfied with him.

Here is much shifting and changing of ministers. Two are passing away, and two are stepping into their places. Mr.

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Bull, I suppose, whom I know not, is almost upon the wing; and Mr. Postlethwaite, with whom I have not been very much acquainted, is either going or gone. A Mr. C—— is come to occupy, for the present at least, the place of the former; and if he can possess himself of the two curacies of Ravenstone and Weston, will, I imagine, take up his abode here. He lives now with Mr. Socket, who is lately become an inhabitant of our village, and having, as I understand, no engagements elsewhere, he will doubtless be happy to obtain a lasting one in this country. What acceptance he finds among the people of Ravenstone I have not heard; but at Olney, where he has preached once, he was hailed as the sun by the Greenlanders after half a year of lamp-light. The *connoisseurs* in preaching, or rather perhaps in preachers, affirm that he resembles Mr. Whitefield more than any man ever did, *save and except himself the said Mr. Whitefield.* Thus they speak of him at present; but the same persons had nearly the same opinion of Mr. P**, of wife-beating memory, for which reason I find myself rather slow to suppose them infallible.

Providence interposed to preserve me from the heaviest affliction that I can now suffer, or I had lately lost Mrs. Unwin, and in a way the most shocking imaginable. Having kindled her fire in the room where she dresses, (an office that she always performs for herself,) she placed the candle on the hearth, and, kneeling, addressed herself to her devotions. A thought struck her, while thus occupied, that the candle being short might possibly catch her clothes. She pinched it out with the tongs, and set it on the table. In a few minutes the chamber was so filled with smoke that her eyes watered, and it was hardly possible to see across it. Supposing that it proceeded from the chimney, she pushed the billets backward, and while she did so, casting her eye downward, perceived that her bed-gown was on fire. In fact, before she extinguished the candle, the mischief that she apprehended was begun; and when she related the matter to me, she showed me her bed-gown with a hole burnt in it as large as this sheet, and her petticoat burnt also in two places. It is not possible, perhaps, that so tragical a death should overtake a person actually engaged in prayer,—for her escape seems almost a miracle. Her presence of mind, by which she was enabled, without calling for help or waiting for it, to gather up her

clothes and plunge them, burning as they were, in water, seems as wonderful a part of the occurrence as any. The very report of fire, though distant, has rendered hundreds torpid and incapable of self-succour; how much more was such a disability to be expected, when the fire had not seized a neighbour's house, or begun its devastations on our own, but was actually consuming the apparel that she wore, and seemed in possession of her person?

It draws toward supper-time. I therefore heartily wish you a good night; and with our best affections to yourself, Mrs. Newton, and Miss Catlett, I remain, my dear friend, truly and warmly yours, W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, The Lodge, Jan. 30, 1788.

It is a fortnight since I heard from you,—that is to say, a week longer than you have accustomed me to wait for a letter. I do not forget that you have recommended it to me on occasions somewhat similar, to banish all anxiety, and to ascribe your silence only to the interruptions of company. Good advice, my dear, but not easily taken by a man circumstanced as I am. I have learned in the school of adversity, a school from which I have no expectation that I shall ever be dismissed, to apprehend the worst, and have ever found it the only course in which I can indulge myself without the least danger of incurring a disappointment. This kind of experience, continued through many years, has given me such an habitual bias to the gloomy side of every thing, that I never have a moment's ease on any subject to which I am not indifferent. How then can I be easy, when I am left afloat upon a sea of endless conjectures, of which you furnish the occasion? Write, I beseech you, and do not forget that I am now a battered actor upon this turbulent stage; that what little vigour of mind I ever had, of the self-supporting kind I mean, has long since been broken; and that though I can bear nothing well, yet any thing better than a state of ignorance concerning your welfare. I have spent hours in the night leaning upon my elbow and wondering what your silence means. I entreat you once more to put an end to these speculations, which cost me more animal spirits than I can spare; if you cannot without great trouble to yourself, which in your situation may very

possibly be the case, contrive opportunities of writing so frequently as usual, only say it, and I am content. I will wait, if you desire it, as long for every letter,—but then let them arrive at the period once fixed, exactly at the time, for my patience will not hold out an hour beyond it. W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge. Feb. 1, 1788.

PARDON me, my dearest cousin, the mournful ditty that I sent you last. There are times when I see every thing through a medium that distresses me to an insupportable degree, and that letter was written in one of them. A fog that had for three days obliterated all the beauties of Weston, and a north-east wind, might possibly contribute not a little to the melancholy that indited it. But my mind is now easy; your letter has made it so, and I feel myself as blithe as a bird in comparison. I love you, my cousin, and cannot suspect, either with or without cause, the least evil in which you may be concerned, without being greatly troubled! Oh trouble! the portion of all mortals,—but mine in particular, would I had never known thee, or could bid thee farewell for ever; for I meet thee at every turn; my pillows are stuffed with thee, my very roses smell of thee, and even my cousin, who would cure me of all trouble if she could, is sometimes innocently the cause of trouble to me.

I now see the unreasonableness of my late trouble, and would, if I could trust myself so far, promise never again to trouble either myself or you in the same manner, unless warranted by some more substantial ground of apprehension.

What I said concerning Homer, my dear, was spoken, or rather written, merely under the influence of a certain jocularity that I felt at that moment. I am in reality so far from thinking myself an ass, and my translation a sand-cart, that I rather seem, in my own account of the matter, one of those flaming steeds harnessed to the chariot of Apollo, of which we read in the works of the ancients. I have lately, I know not how, acquired a certain superiority to myself in this business, and in this last revisal have elevated the expression to a degree far surpassing its former boast. A few evenings since I had an opportunity to try how far I might venture to expect such success of my labours as can alone repay them, by reading the

first book of my Iliad to a friend of ours. He dined with you once at Olney. His name is Greatheed, a man of letters and of taste. He dined with us, and the evening proving dark and dirty, we persuaded him to take a bed. I entertained him as I tell you. He heard me with great attention, and with evident symptoms of the highest satisfaction, which, when I had finished the exhibition, he put out of all doubt by expressions which I cannot repeat. Only this he said to Mrs. Unwin while I was in another room, that he had never entered into the spirit of Homer before, nor had any thing like a due conception of his manner. This I have said, knowing that it will please you, and will now say no more.

Adieu!—my dear, will you never speak of coming to Weston more? W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, The Lodge, Feb. 7, 1788.

THANKS beforehand for the books which you give me to expect. They will all be welcome. Of the two editions of Shakespeare I prefer that which is printed in the largest type, independent of all other considerations. Don Quixote by any hand must needs be welcome, and by Smollett's especially, because I have never seen it. He had a drollery of his own, which, for aught I know, may suit an English taste as well as that of Cervantes, perhaps better, because to us somewhat more intelligible.

It is pretty well known, (the clerk took care it should be so,) both at Northampton and in this country, who wrote the Mortuary Verses. All that I know of their success is, that he sent a bundle of them to Maurice Smith at Olney, who sold them for three-pence a piece,—a high price for a *Memento Mori*, a commodity not generally in great request. The other small poem, addressed to Mrs. Throck, has given, as I understand, great satisfaction at Bucklands. The old baronet and his lady, having heard that such a piece existed, (Mrs. Bromley Chester, I suppose, must have been their informant,) wrote to desire a copy. A copy was sent, and they answered it with warm encomiums.

Mr. Bull, the lame curate, having been lately preferred to a living, another was of course wanted to supply his place. By the recommendation of Mr. Romaine, a Mr. C * * * came

down. He lodges at Mr. Socket's in this village, and Mr. Socket lives in the small house to which you had once conceived a liking. Our lacquey is also clerk of the parish. C * * * a day or two after his arrival had a corpse to bury at Weston. Having occasion to consult with the clerk concerning this matter, he sought him in our kitchen. Samuel entered the study to inform us that there was a clergyman without: he was accordingly invited in, and in he came. We had but lately dined; the wine was on the table, and he drank three glasses while the corpse in question was getting ready for its last journey. The moment he entered the room, I felt myself incurably prejudiced against him: his features, his figure, his address, and all that he uttered, confirmed that prejudice, and I determined, having once seen him, to see him no more. Two days after he overtook me in the village. "Your humble servant, Mr. Cowper! a fine morning, sir, for a walk. I had liked to have called on you yesterday morning to tell you that I had become your near neighbour. I live at Mr. Socket's." I answered without looking at him, as drily as possible,—"Are you come to stay any time in the country?"—He believed he was.—"Which way," I replied, "are you going? to Olney?" —"Yes."—"I am going to Mr. Throckmorton's garden, and I wish you a good day, sir."—I was in fact going to Olney myself, but this rencontre gave me such a violent twist another way that I found it impossible to recover that direction, and accordingly there we parted. All this I related at the Hall the next time we dined there, describing also my apprehensions and distress lest, whether I would or not, I should be obliged to have intercourse with a man to me so perfectly disagreeable. A good deal of laugh and merriment ensued, and there for that time it ended. The following Sunday, in the evening, I received a note to this purport: "Mr. C * * *'s compliments," &c. Understanding that my friends at the Hall were to dine with me the next day, he took the liberty to invite himself to eat a bit of mutton with me, being sure that I should be happy to introduce him. Having read the note, I threw it to Mrs. Unwin. "There," said I, "take that and read it; then tell me if it be not an effort of impudence the most extraordinary you ever heard of." I expected some such *push* from the man; I knew he was equal to it. She read it, *and* we were both of a mind. I sat down to my desk, and

with a good deal of emotion gave it just such an answer as it would have deserved had it been genuine. But having heard by accident in the morning that he spells his name with a C, and observing in the note that it was spelt with a K, a suspicion struck me that it was a fiction. I looked at it more attentively and perceived that it was directed by Mrs. Throck. The inside I found afterwards was written by her brother George. This served us with another laugh on the subject, and I have hardly seen, and never spoken to, Mr. C * * * since. So, my dear, *that's the little story I promised you.*

Mr. Bull called here this morning: from him I learn what follows concerning P * * *. He waited on the Bishop of London, like a blundering ignoramus as he is, without his canonicals. The Bishop was highly displeased, as he had cause to be; and having pretty significantly given him to know it, addressed himself to his chaplain with tokens of equal displeasure, enjoining him never more to admit a clergyman to him in such attire. To pay this visit he made a journey from Clapham to town on horseback. His horse he left at an inn on the Lambeth side of Westminster Bridge. Thence he proceeded to the Bishop's, and from the Bishop's to Mr. Scott. Having finished this last visit he begged Mr. Scott's company to the inn where he had left his horse, which he said was at the foot of *London* Bridge. Thither they went, but neither the inn nor the horse were there. Then says P * * *, it must be at Blackfriars' Bridge that I left it. Thither also they went, but to as little purpose. Luckily for him there was but one more bridge, and there they found it. To make the poor youth amends for all these misadventures, it so happened that the incumbent, his predecessor, died before the crops of last year were reaped. The whole profits of that year, by consequence, go into P.'s pocket, which was never so stuffed before.

Good night, my dearest coz. Mrs. Unwin's love attends you. Affectionately yours, WM. COWPER.

TO MRS. KING, PERTENHALL, NEAR KIMBOLTON, HUNTS.

Weston Lodge, near Olney, Bucks,
Feb. 12, 1788.

DEAR MADAM,

A LETTER from a lady who was once intimate with my brother, *could not fail of* being most acceptable to me. I lost him

just in the moment when those truths which have recommended my volumes to your approbation, were become his daily sustenance, as they had long been mine. But the will of God was done. I have sometimes thought that had his life been spared, being made brothers by a stricter tie than ever in the bands of the same faith, hope, and love, we should have been happier in each other than it was in the power of mere natural affection to make us. But it was his blessing to be taken from a world in which he had no longer any wish to continue; and it will be mine, if while I dwell in it, my time may not be altogether wasted. In order to effect that good end, I wrote what I am happy to find it has given you pleasure to read. But for that pleasure, madam, you are indebted neither to me, nor to my Muse; but, (as you are well aware,) to Him who alone can make divine truths palatable, in whatever vehicle conveyed. It is an established philosophical axiom, that nothing can communicate what it has not in itself; but in the effects of Christian communion, a very strong exception is found to this general rule, however self-evident it may seem. A man himself destitute of all spiritual consolation, may, by occasion, impart it to others. Thus I, it seems, who wrote those very poems to amuse a mind oppressed with melancholy, and who have myself derived from them no other benefit, (for mere success in authorship will do me no good,) have nevertheless, by so doing, comforted others, at the same time that they administer to me no consolation. But I will proceed no farther in this strain, lest my prose should damp a pleasure that my verse has happily excited. On the contrary, I will endeavour to rejoice in your joy, and especially because I have been myself the instrument of conveying it.

Since the receipt of your obliging letter, I have naturally had recourse to my recollection to try if it would furnish me with the name that I find at the bottom of it. At the same time, I am aware that there is nothing more probable than that my brother might be honoured with your friendship without mentioning it to me; for except a very short period before his death, we lived necessarily at a considerable distance from each other. Ascribe it, madam, not to an impertinent curiosity, but to a desire of better acquaintance with you, if I take the liberty to ask, (since ladies' names, at least, are changeable,) whether *yours* was at that time the same as now?

Sincerely wishing you all happiness, and especially that which I am sure you covet most, the happiness which is from above, I remain, dear madam—early as it may seem to say it,

Affectionately yours, W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

DEAR SIR, The Lodge, Feb. 14, 1788.

THOUGH it be long since I received your last, I have not yet forgotten the impression it made upon me, nor how sensibly I felt myself obliged by your unreserved and friendly communications. I will not apologize for my silence in the interim, because apprized as you are of my present occupation, the excuse that I might allege will present itself to you of course, and to dilate upon it would therefore be waste of paper.

You are in possession of the best security imaginable for the due improvement of your time, which is a just sense of its value. Had I been, when at your age, as much affected by that important consideration as I am at present, I should not have devoted, as I did, all the earliest parts of my life to amusement only. I am now in the predicament into which the thoughtlessness of youth betrays nine-tenths of mankind, who never discover that the health and good spirits which generally accompany it, are in reality blessings only according to the use we make of them, till advanced years begin to threaten them with the loss of both. How much wiser would thousands have been than now they ever will be, had a puny constitution, or some occasional infirmity, constrained them to devote those hours to study and reflection, which for want of some such check they have given entirely to dissipation! I therefore account you happy, who young as you are, need not be informed that you cannot always be so; and who already know that the materials, upon which age can alone build its comfort, should be brought together at an earlier period. You have indeed, in losing a father, lost a friend, but you have not lost his instructions. His example was not buried with him; but happily for you, (happily because you are desirous to avail yourself of it,) still lives in your remembrance, and is cherished in your best affections.

Your last letter was dated from the house of a gentleman, who was, I believe, my schoolfellow. For the Mr. C——, who lived at Watford, while I had any connexion with Hertfordshire, *must have been* the father of the present, and according to his

age, and the state of his health, when I saw him last, must have been long dead. I never was acquainted with the family further than by report, which always spoke honourably of them, though in all my journeys to and from my father's I must have passed the door. The circumstance however reminds me of the beautiful reflection of Glaucus in the sixth Iliad; beautiful as well for the affecting nature of the observation, as for the justness of the comparison, and the incomparable simplicity of the expression. I feel that I shall not be satisfied without transcribing it, and yet perhaps *my* Greek may be difficult to decipher.

Οἵη περ φύλλων γενεή, τοιήδε καὶ ἀνδρῶν.
Φύλλα τὰ μέν τ' ἄνεμος χαμάδις χέει, ἄλλα δέ θ' ὕλη
Τηλεθόωσα φύει, ἔαρος δ' ἐπιγίγνεται ὥρη·
Ὣς ἀνδρῶν γενεὴ, ἡ μὲν φύει, ἡ δ' ἀπολήγει.

Excuse this piece of pedantry in a man whose Homer is always before him. What would I give that he were living now, and within my reach! I, of all men living, have the best excuse for indulging such a wish, unreasonable as it may seem, for I have no doubt that the fire of his eye, and the smile of his lips, would put me now and then in possession of his full meaning more effectually than any commentator. I return you many thanks for the elegies which you sent me, both which I think deserving of much commendation. I should requite you but ill by sending you my mortuary verses, neither at present can I prevail on myself to do it, having no frank, and being conscious that they are not worth carriage without one. I have one copy left, and that copy I will keep for you. W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Feb. 16, 1788.

I HAVE now three letters of yours, my dearest cousin, before me, all written within the space of a week, and must be indeed insensible of kindness, did I not feel yours on this occasion. I cannot describe to you, neither could you comprehend it if I should, the manner in which my mind is sometimes impressed with melancholy on particular subjects. Your late silence was such a subject. I heard, saw, and felt a thousand terrible things which had no real existence, and was haunted by them night and day, till they at last extorted from me the doleful epistle, which I have since wished had been burned before I sent it. But the

cloud has passed, and as far as you are concerned, my heart is once more at rest.

Before you gave me the hint, I had once or twice, as I lay on my bed, watching the break of day, ruminated on the subject which, in your last but one, you recommended to me.

Slavery, or a release from slavery, such as the poor negroes have endured, or perhaps both these topics together, appeared to me a theme so important at the present juncture, and at the same time so susceptible of poetical management, that I more than once perceived myself ready to start in that career, could I have allowed myself to desert Homer for so long a time as it would have cost me to do them justice.

While I was pondering these things, the public prints informed me that Miss More was on the point of publication, having actually finished what I had not yet begun. The sight of her advertisement convinced me that my best course would be that to which I felt myself most inclined,—to persevere, without turning aside to attend to any other call, however alluring, in the business I have in hand.

It occurred to me likewise, that I have already borne my testimony in favour of my black brethren; and that I was one of the earliest, if not the first, of those who have in the present day expressed their detestation of the diabolical traffic in question.

On all these accounts I judged it best to be silent, and especially because I cannot doubt that some effectual measures will now be taken to alleviate the miseries of their condition, the whole nation being in possession of the case, and it being impossible also to allege an argument in behalf of man-merchandise, that can deserve a hearing. I shall be glad to see Hannah More's poem; she is a favourite writer with me, and has more nerve and energy both in her thoughts and language than half the he rhymers in the kingdom. The Thoughts on the Manners of the Great will likewise be most acceptable. I want to learn as much of the world as I can, but to acquire that learning at a distance; and a book with such a title promises fair to serve the purpose effectually.

I recommend it to you, my dear, by all means to embrace the fair occasion, and to put yourself in the way of being squeezed and incommoded a few hours, for the sake of hearing and seeing what you will never have an opportunity to see and hear here.

after,—the trial of a man who has been greater and more feared than the great Mogul himself. Whatever we are at home, we certainly have been tyrants in the East; and if these men have, as they are charged, rioted in the miseries of the innocent, and dealt death to the guiltless with an unsparing hand, may they receive a retribution that shall in future make all governors and judges of ours, in those distant regions, tremble! While I speak thus, I equally wish them acquitted. They were both my schoolfellows, and for Hastings I had a particular value.

Farewell. W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston, Feb. 19, 1789.

I HAVE much to thank you for. In the first place for your Sermon; in which you have addressed your brethren with all the delicacy and fidelity that were due both to their character and your own. If they were not impressed by it, it must be because like the rabbis of old, they are less impressible than others. Such I suppose they are, and will be, so long as doctorship and clerical honours of every degree shall have a tendency to make unenlightened simpletons imagine themselves the only interpreters of God. In the next place, for your thoughts on the Slave Trade; in which there is such evidence of conscientious candour and moderation as will make it, I doubt not, to all prudent persons the most satisfactory publication on the subject. It is a subject on which I can ruminate till I feel myself lost in mazes of speculation, never to be unravelled. Could I suppose that the cruel hardships under which millions of that unhappy race have lived and died, were only preparatory to a deliverance to be wrought for them hereafter, like that of Israel out of Egypt, my reasonings would cease, and I should at once acquiesce in a dispensation, severe indeed for a time, but leading to invaluable and everlasting mercies. But there is no room, Scripture affords no warrant for any such expectations. A question then presents itself which I cannot help asking, though conscious that it ought to be suppressed. Is it to be esteemed a sufficient vindication of divine justice, if these miserable creatures, tormented as they have been from generation to generation, shall at last receive some relief, some abatement of their woes, shall not be treated absolutely as brutes for the future? The thousands of them who have already passed into an eternal state,

hopeless of any thing better than they found in this life, what is to become of them? Is it essential to the perfection of a plan concerted by infinite wisdom, that such wretches should exist at all, who from the beginning of their being, through all its endless duration, can experience nothing for which they should say, Is it good for us that we were created? These reasonings, and such as these, engage me often, and more intensely than I wish them to do, when the case of the poor Negroes occurs to me. I know that the difficulty, if it cannot be solved, may be severed, and that the answer to which it lies open is this or somewhat like it,—God is sovereign: All are his, and he may do what he will with his own: what passes upon this grain of sand, which we call the earth, is trivial when considered with reference to those purposes that have the universe for their object. And lastly—All these things will be accounted for and explained hereafter. An answer like this would have satisfied me once, when I was myself happy;—for I have frequently thought that the happy are easily reconciled to the woes of the miserable. But in the school of affliction I have learned to cavil and to question; and finding myself in my own case reduced frequently to the necessity of accounting for my own lot by the means of an uncontrollable sovereignty which gives no account of its matters, am apt to discover, what appear to me, tremendous effects of the same sovereignty in the case of others. Then I feel—I will not tell you what—and yet I must—a wish that I had never been, a wonder that I am, and an ardent but hopeless desire not to be. Thus have I written to you my whole heart on a subject which I thought to have touched only, and to have left it. But the pen once in my hand, I am no longer master of my own intentions.

To make you some small amends, (the best I can at present,) after having thanked you in the third place, for a basket of most excellent fish, (halibut and lobsters,) I will subjoin some stanzas in the mortuary style, composed at the request of the clerk of All-Saints' parish, Northampton. They were printed at the foot of his Bill of Mortality, published at Christmas last. Some time in November the said clerk was introduced to me one morning before breakfast. Being asked his business, he told me that he wanted verses, and should be much obliged to me if I would furnish them. I replied, that in Northampton there must be many poets, because poets abound

every where, and because the newspaper printed there was seldom destitute of a copy. I then mentioned in particular his namesake, Mr. Cox the statuary, who to my knowledge often wooes the Muse, and not without some cause to boast of his success. To which he answered—What you say, Sir, is true. But Mr. Cox is a gentleman of much reading, and the people of our town do not well understand him. He has written for me, but nine in ten of us were stone-blind to his meaning. Finding that he had an answer to all that I could urge, and particularly affected by the eulogium implied in his last, I suffered myself to be persuaded.

We are truly sorry to be informed, as we were by Mr. Bull, that Mrs. Newton is so much indisposed. Our affectionate remembrances and best wishes attend you both.

Yours most sincerely, my dear friend,

WM. COWPER.

NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

Remarkable fog of 1783, p. 31.—On this subject Mr. Gorham has favoured me with the following curious note.

"Mr. Grimshawe[1] quotes Lalande for a scientific solution of this phenomenon. Lalande was a first rate astronomer, but, I believe, no meteorologist: at all events, his solution is totally inapplicable to the facts:—the fog was remarkable for the absence of humidity. An equally futile speculation was, that this general and long prevailing obscurity was occasioned by our planet being then immersed in the tail of a comet[2]; a fancy which has been well exposed by a living member of the French Institute, the celebrated M. Arago. See his Notice on Comets[3] (sect. 11, c. iii.) published in the French *Annuaire* for 1832, where will be found the best account of the fog of 1783, and of the probable causes of it.

It commenced nearly on the same day, June 18, at places very distant from each other, as Paris, Avignon, Turin, Padua. It was found by travellers on the highest parts of the Alps. It extended from the northern

[1] "It is known to you that for some days past people have been incessantly inquiring what is the occasion of the thick dry fog which almost constantly covers the heavens? And, as this question is particularly put to astronomers, I think myself obliged to say a few words on the subject, more especially since a kind of terror begins to spread in society. It is said by some, that the disasters in Calabria were preceded by similar weather: and by others, that a dangerous comet reigns at present. In 1773, I experienced how fast conjectures of this kind, which begin amongst the ignorant, even in the most enlightened ages, proceed from mouth to mouth, till they reach the best societies, and find their way even to the public prints. The multitude, therefore, may easily be supposed to draw strange conclusions when they see the sun of a blood colour, shed a melancholy light, and cause a most sultry heat.

"This, however, is nothing more than a very natural effect from a hot sun, after a long succession of heavy rain. The first impression of heat has necessarily and suddenly rarefied a superabundance of watery particles, with which the earth was deeply impregnated, and given them, as they rose, a dimness and rarefaction not usual to common fogs. "De La Lande."

The danger to which men of philosophical minds seem to be peculiarly exposed is the habit of accounting for the phenomena of nature too exclusively by the operation of mere secondary causes; while the supreme agency of a first Great Cause is too much overlooked. The universality of these appearances occurring at the same time in England, France, Italy, and so many other countries, awakens reflections of a more solemn cast, in a mind imbued with Christian principles. He who reads Professor Barruel's work, and the concurring testimony adduced by Robinson, as to the extent of infidelity and even atheism, gathering at that time in the different states of Europe, might, we think, see in these signs in the moon, and in the stars, and in the heavens, some intimations of impending judgements, which followed so shortly after; and evidences of the power and existence of that God, which many so impiously questioned and defied."—*Grimshawe's Cowper*, vol. ii. pp. 141, 142.

[2] A comet appeared in 1783, but it did not pass its perihelion till November 15, and was never near the earth.

[3] This work was translated by Colonel Gold, and published in 1833.

coast of Africa to Sweden, and over a great part of North America. It continued nearly a month. It was so dense in Languedoc, that the sun was not visible till it was 12° above the horizon, and was afterwards red, and might be viewed by the naked eye without inconvenience. It was chiefly distinguished from ordinary fogs by its *dryness*. At Geneva, Saussure's air hygrometer stood as low as 68° and even 57°, though it rises to 100° in common fogs. Some meteorologists called it a *smoke;* it had a disagreeable smell. At the period of new moon it shed a light (at midnight) equal to that of the full moon; hence M. Arago conceives that it was phosphorescent.

"Such were *the remarkable phenomena* of 'Nature's sickly eye.' Without incurring Cowper's just censure of 'the spruce Philosopher,' who, 'eagle-eyed in nature's tendencies,' overlooks 'the genuine cause of all,' it is an interesting and rational employment to enquire into the *natural cause* of such 'portentous, unexampled,' but perhaps not altogether 'unexplained' effects. Dr. Franklin suggested an explanation, from the imperfect combustion of an immense *bolide*, passing rapidly through the atmosphere, and spreading torrents of smoke in all directions; or in the general dispersion of thick columns of smoke which Mount Hecla projected into the air during the whole summer. M. Arago thinks that these suggestions of the illustrious American philosopher deserve attentive discussion. It is a fact not to be overlooked, that the *most terrible* eruption of Hecla on record took place on the 1st, the 8th, the 18th, and the 22d of June, 1783, and that these convulsions continued till the 9th of August. M. Arago points out, however, a more general cause for the fog or smoke of 1783, in more deeply seated convulsions of the earth, occasioning numerous fissures in its solid covering, through which gaseous vapours and volcanic effluvia escaped, and became widely dispersed. Of these 'fires from beneath,' prevailing to a great extent, there were indications the preceding February, in the frightful Calabrian earthquakes; while the eruption of Hecla was attended by flames bursting from the bosom of the sea, thirty miles from the Icelandic shore.

"The dry fog of 1831 is stated by M. Arago to have resembled, in many particulars, that of 1783.

"Arguing against the conjecture that the earth was at that time plunged *in the tail of a comet*, M. Arago shows the physical impossibility of a comet's train remaining in the vicinity of the earth for above a month. It is an unfortunate fact for the absurd supposition which he refutes, that the only comet which appeared in 1783 was an insignificant cloudy vapour, invisible to the naked eye, *without a tail*, and never nearer to the earth than fifty millions of miles: its nearest approach was on the 15th of November, long *after* the fog had been dispersed; consequently *during* the fog of the preceding summer it must have been at an immense distance. (See Pingré, *Cometographie*[4], tome ii. p. 511. Paris, 1784, 4to.)

"*What* has not been laid to the charge of these 'wandering stars?'—wars, pestilence, &c. &c. 'Would to God,' writes Thomas Erastus, about the middle of the sixteenth century, 'that wars had no other cause than

[4] In a newspaper article in which this work was frequently quoted, this word was printed "Comet's Graphic."

the bile of princes heated by the influence of comets! A skilful physician, with a small dose of rhubarb, or of syrup of roses, might have easily brought back the sweets of peace.' (Quoted by Pingré, tom. ii p. 150.)—G. C. G."

M. le Roy, in a Memoir upon this fog, read before the Royal Academy of Sciences in the autumn of the same year, said the only one resembling it, of which he had found any notice was in the year 1252.

I give you joy of a thaw, that has put an end to a frost of nine weeks continuance, with very little interruption,—the longest that has happened since the year 1739. *I suppose it is a universal blessing, and probably felt all over Europe.* Feb. 22, 1784.—Pp. 81, 82.—This frost was of longer continuance in France. It began early in December, and the minister of police had in consequence more arduous duties to fulfil than had ever fallen upon any of his predecessors. Government issued money to the *curés* and to the commissary of police to provide the destitute with fuel and bread; and the king, in authorising the minister of finance to issue whatever sums might be necessary for this purpose, said to him, *Qu'il n'y avoit aucune dépense qui ne dût être retrenchée, s il le falloit, pour celle-la.* A heavy snow had fallen, and lay so deep in Paris, that it was hopeless to attempt clearing it. *On calcule qu'il y a sur la surface de cette capitale quarante-huit lieues de rues à nettoyer. On voit qu'il en résulteroit une multitude de bras, de voitures, et de chevaux, effrayante seulement à l'imagination, et une dépense encore qui feroit tort aux objets de charité plus pressans.* To keep the communications open was all that could be done. On February 3, the quantity of wood in the capital amounted only to seventy thousand loads, and six thousand of these being carried off in one day, guards were stationed at the wood-yards, and an ordonnance was issued that no individual should purchase more than half a load at one time. Many people began to make use of pit-coal, but this was no sooner in demand than it failed; and it was but cold comfort for the Parisians to be told that two hundred thousand cords of wood were detained by the state of the weather, on the way, ten leagues off. Ten thousand loads were placed in reserve for the bakers, and there was so much reason to fear lest the rest should be consumed before the navigation of the river would be open, that the Treasury advanced money for bringing thirty thousand loads by land, and at the same time, to diminish the consumption, it was proposed that all bishops, abbés, monks, intendants, magistrates, and other persons whatever, holding any office in the provinces, should repair to their respective posts; and that all persons who had houses in the provinces should be invited to go to them without delay. But these measures were deemed to be inefficient and too slow in their operation. All the horses and carts which could be procured without stopping the supplies of food, were put in request for the service; and many of the citizens furnished such means of conveyance as they possessed, and all were invited to do so, as it was difficult to procure enough; when on February 21, after seventy-six days of almost uninterrupted frost, the thaw began."—*Mem. Secrets*, tom. xxv.

Caraccioli, p. 90.—"The following cursory remarks of Cowper appear highly worthy of preservation. They were written on separate scraps of paper without any title, and may find perhaps their most suitable place in

sequel to the letter in which he quoted the writer, whose character he has sketched at full length, and with a masterly hand."—*Hayley.*

"Caraccioli appears to me to have been a wise man, and I believe he was a good man in a religious sense. But his wisdom and his goodness both savour more of the philosopher than the Christian. In the latter of these characters he seems defective principally in this,—that instead of sending his reader to God as an inexhaustible source of happiness to his intelligent creatures, and exhorting him to cultivate communion with his Maker, he directs him to his own heart, and to the contemplation of his own faculties and powers, as a never-failing spring of comfort and content. He speaks even of the natural man as made in the image of God, and supposes a resemblance of God to consist in a sort of independent self-sufficing and self-complacent felicity, which can hardly be enjoyed without the forfeiture of all humility, and a flat denial of some of the most important truths in Scripture.

"As a philosopher he refines to an excess, and his arguments instead of convincing others, if pushed as far as they would go, would convict him of absurdity himself. When, for instance, he would depreciate earthly riches by telling us, that gold and diamonds are only matter modified in a particular way, and thence concludes them not more valuable in themselves than the dust under our feet, his consequence is false, and his cause is hurt by the assertion. It is that very modification that gives them both a beauty and a value—a value and a beauty recognized in Scripture, and by the universal consent of all well-informed and civilized nations. It is in vain to tell mankind that gold and dirt are equal, so long as their experience convinces them of the contrary. It is necessary therefore to distinguish between the thing itself and the abuse of it. Wealth is in fact a blessing when honestly acquired and conscientiously employed: and when otherwise, the man is to be blamed and not his treasure. How does the Scripture combat the vice of covetousness? not by asserting that gold is only earth exhibiting itself to us under a particular modification, and therefore not worth seeking: but by telling us that covetousness is idolatry, that the love of money is the root of all evil, that it has occasioned in some even the shipwreck of their faith, and is always in whomsoever it obtains an abomination.

"A man might have said to Caraccioli, 'give me your purse full of ducats, and I will give you my old wig; they are both composed of the same matter under different modifications.' What could the philosopher have replied? He must have made the exchange or denied his own principles.

"Again, when speaking of sumptuous edifices, he calls a palace an assemblage of sticks and stones which a puff of wind may demolish, or a spark of fire consume; and thinks he has reduced a magnificent building and a cottage to the same level, when he has told us, that the latter viewed through an optic glass may be made to appear as large as the former, and that the former seen through the same glass inverted, may be reduced to the pitiful dimensions of the latter. Has he indeed carried his point? Is he *not rather* imposing on the judgement of his readers, just as the glass would *impose* upon their senses? How is it possible to deduce a substantial *argument* in this case, from an acknowledged deception of the sight? The

objects continue what they were, the palace is still a palace, and the cottage is not at all ennobled in reality, though we contemplate them ever so long through an illusive medium. There is in fact a real difference between them, and such a one as the Scripture itself takes very emphatical notice of, assuring us that in the last day, much shall be required of him to whom much was given; that every man shall be then considered as a steward, and render a strict account of the things with which he was intrusted. This consideration, indeed, may make the dwellers in palaces tremble, who living for the most part in the continued abuse of their talents, squandering and wasting and spending upon themselves their Master's treasure, will have reason enough to envy the cottager whose accounts will be more easily settled. But to tell mankind that a palace and a hovel are the same thing, is to affront their senses, to contradict their knowledge, and to disgust their understandings.

"Herein seems to consist one of the principal differences between Philosophy and Scripture, or the Wisdom of Man and the Wisdom of God. The former endeavours, indeed, to convince the judgement, but it frequently is obliged to have recourse to unlawful means, such as misrepresentation and the play of fancy. The latter addresses itself to the judgement likewise, but it carries its point by awakening the conscience, by enlightening the understanding, and by appealing to our own experience. As Philosophy therefore cannot make a Christian, so a Christian ought to take care that he be not too much a Philosopher. It is mere folly instead of wisdom to forego those arguments, and to shut our eyes upon those motives, which Truth itself has pointed out to us, and which alone are adequate to the purpose; and to busy ourselves in making vain experiments on the strength of others of our own invention. In fact the world, which however it has dared to controvert the authenticity of Scripture, has never been able to impeach the wisdom of its precepts, or the reasonableness of its exhortations, has sagacity enough to see through the fallacy of such reasonings, and will rather laugh at the sage who declares war against matter of fact, than become proselytes to his opinion."

The Marquis de Caraccioli was born at Paris, and was a colonel in the Polish service. "Most of his works, which are very numerous, have been well received," says the Abbé Sabatier de Castres, "by the public, but little praised by men of letters, *(des gens de lettres,)* they no doubt think it amiss that a soldier should choose religious subjects on which to exercise his pen." All however that he has written, when he has known how to confine himself to morals without touching upon dogmas, shows him to be a judicious author, full of sentiments of honour and religion; a well informed man of letters (*litterateur*) who makes use of his attainments only to adorn virtue and inspire the love of it: an estimable writer, who though without elegance, correctness or precision in his style, has nevertheless a tone of warmth and of earnestness in his manner of expressing himself, which makes his works be liked. It may even be said that he has rendered service to the pulpit, or rather to mediocre preachers, who make no scruple of introducing whole passages from his *Joussance de soi-même*, from his *Univers Enigmatique*, his *Tableau de la Mort*, and from some of his other writings.

M. de Caraccioli has also published a *Dictionnaire Critique, pittoresque, et sentencieux*, in which one is sorry to find language altogether unlike that of his former works. Nothing can be more frivolous either in manner, or in matter[4]."

One of his books, *La Jouissance de soi mesme*, provoked some of his readers as much as it pleased those who pilfered from it for their sermons. "Seduced by the epicurean title of self-enjoyment, the sale of the work," says Mr. D'Israeli, "was continual with libertines, who however found nothing but very tedious essays on religion and morality. In the sixth edition the Marquis greatly exults in his successful contrivance, by which means he had punished the vicious curiosity of certain persons, and perhaps had persuaded some whom otherwise his book might never have reached[5]."

His Travels of Reason in Europe were translated into English in 1780. The Monthly Review, after condemning it as a superficial performance, in which "the author aims at the style and manner of Voltaire, but is only the shadow of that admired writer," extracts the following passage, and introduces it with a sneer as a specimen of the author's *profound judgement.*

"He judged that the age gave much into what is merely superficial; that people were less fond of diving into the bottom of things, than of slightly skimming them over; that men of real learning were as scarce as the number of men of wit was increased; that a love of novelty made people invent things as absurd as they are ridiculous; that under pretence of aiming at the best, very often burlesque changes were made; that the senses usurped the place of the soul: that the necessary was neglected to hunt after the superfluous: that people allowed themselves every thing because they durst do every thing;—and that independence is the ruin of all good order."

Caraccioli is the reputed author of the letters which he published as Clement the XIVth's. and which are well known by that Pope's name of Ganganelli.

The Reverend Matthew Powley, M. A. p. 114.—There is in the parish of Lowther, a small village called Whale, which was anciently held by a family of the name *de Whale.* It is about a mile south from the church, and consists of some eight or ten families, with two or three straggling houses on Whale Moor. In one of those houses Matthew Powley was born, on Sept. 21, 1740. He was educated at the Free Grammar School in Appleby, which Queen Elizabeth had established upon an older foundation, and which under its master, Richard Yates, was at that time, and continued to be during more than half a century, the best school in these northern counties. There his proficiency was such, that Mr. Yates appointed him his usher. Soon afterwards he was admitted at Queen's College, Oxford, nearly half the foundation of which is said to have been supplied by Yates's pupils: and to that foundation Mr. Powley would certainly have been in due time elected, had it not been for the feeling which prevailed against those who were then classed together under *the ill* assorted appellations of Methodists and Hutchinsonians.

[4] *Les Trois Siècles.*

[5] Curiosities of Literature, vol. ii. p. 60.

It was at Oxford that, (in the words of his memorialist in the Christian Observer,) Mr. Powley became, for the first time, "experimentally acquainted with religion, through his attendance on the ministry of a clergyman who preached there at that time with fidelity and success." The clergyman was the noted Mr. Haweis, who then resided in Magdalen Hall, and preached in Magdalen Church. The few young men who became his disciples, met in each other's rooms to read and pray and sing psalms or hymns; this, though not done to be seen of men, could not but be heard of them; it excited derision among their fellows, and that sort of interference on the part of their tutors which was more likely to inflame zeal than to moderate and direct it. Mr. Powley was informed that the heads of the college disapproved of these meetings, and that they insisted upon his promising never to attend again at Mr. Haweis' room, or his church,—a promise which "by the over-persuasion of his friends he was induced to make, though he could not but think it unreasonable." It was soon however found that though the promise was observed to the letter, he had once or twice met Mr. Haweis at a friend's room; and as it shortly after appeared that from scruples of conscience he absented himself from the hall on Christmas day, when the Boar's head, according to immemorial custom in that college, was brought in, and the old carol sung before it, they determined to exclude him from the foundation.

The state of his mind at this time is fully expressed in a statement, preserved among his papers, and entitled, "The Case of the Reverend Mr. Powley, A.M. late of Queen's College, Oxford, who, in the year 1761, was excluded from the foundation, and threatened to be expelled the college, for being acquainted with the Reverend Mr. Haweis; a case which will throw much light upon the late Proceedings against Six Members of St. Edmund's Hall: in a Letter to a Friend." It seems to have been intended for publication at that time, or as materials for some of those persons who were then taking up the cause of the six students. "His conscience," says the writer, "was weak enough to think it wrong to appear at an illicit conventicle held every year in the Bachelor's Common Room on the Boar's-head night. I call it a conventicle upon Dr. Noel's authority, for it is *a private assembly for the exercise of religion;* for you must know, they sing the high praises of God in this private assembly; and praising God surely is an exercise of religion. I call it an illicit conventicle, '*because there are more than five persons assembled there, besides those of the same household;*' yea, I believe I may say there are sometimes fifty and five present. If you would be let into the secret history and know the origin of this festival, I must refer you to the gentlemen of Queen's, who are perfectly acquainted with it. The only thing that I know of it is, that it is said to be kept in commemoration of a great boar that, in the times of popery, is said to have been killed by one of their fraternity with a *Logicæ compendium*, which they say he crammed down his throat, and choked it. In honour of this noble exploit, every person present is to sing a monkish song, in which are these words,

Our steward has provided this
In honour of the King of Bliss.

Now for people sometimes half drunk to pretend to do honour to the King

of Bliss, and especially in such a manner, he was so weak as to think had something in it that bordered upon blasphemy, and therefore durst not appear in such an assembly. But as this illicit conventicle to honour the King of Bliss is tolerated in Queen's, yea, countenanced by the fellows of the college, who come on another evening to sing and be merry with the Bachelors; nay, as this is not sufficient, but after prostrating themselves in God's house, and receiving the holy sacrament, the boar's head is immediately ushered into the hall with the same pious hymn, as the first fruits of plentiful gaudy,—as this I say is the case, and he refused to join them, yea intimated that he thought it sinful, no wonder that they should cry out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians! Great is the Boar's-head of Queen's!—therefore reject him as an incurable Methodist. Nor is it any wonder that the governors of the college should be enraged that such an upstart as he should condemn that as sinful, which they could with such glee lick their lips over."

"The Boar's-head, soused," says Hearne, "was anciently the first dish on Christmas Day, and was carried up to the principal table in the hall with great state and solemnity." Upon this occasion a carol was sung, which is thus given in the collection of Christmas Carols printed by Wynkyn de Worde 1521.

A CAROL, BRINGYNG IN THE BORE'S HEED.

Caput Apri differo,
Reddens laudes Domino.

The Bore's heed in hande bring I,
With garlands gay and rosemary,
I praye you all synge merely
Qui estis in convivio.
The Bore's heed I understande,
Is the chefe servyce in this lande,
Loke where ever it be fande,
Servite cum cantico.

Be gladde lordes, bothe more and lasse,
For this hath ordeyned our stewarde,
To chere you all this Christmasse,
The Bore's heed with mustarde.

The modernized version, (bearing marks of considerable antiquity itself,) which Mr. Powley could not "away with," and which is still sung at Queen's, Mr. Dibden has printed in his Typographical Antiquities, vol. ii. p. 252, from a copy supplied to him by a tutor of that college.

The Boar's head in hand bear I,
Bedeck'd with bay's and rosemary;
And I pray you, my masters, be merry,
Quot estis in convivio:
Caput Apri defero,
Reddens laudes Domino.

The Boar's head, as I understand,
Is the rarest dish in all this land;
Which thus bedeck'd with a gay garland,

Let us *servire cantico.*
Caput Apri defero,
Reddens laudes Domino.

Our steward hath provided this
In honour of the King of Bliss;
Which on this day to be served is
In Reginensi atrio.
Caput Apri defero,
Reddens laudes Domino.

A writer in the Christian Observer, in his account of Mr. Powley, (wherein no mention is made of the Boar's head,) says that "his conduct on this occasion secured to him the favourable opinion and good wishes of all respectable persons to whom he was made known; it did more for him: it gained for him the patronage of a man whose praise is in the Gospel, and with whom indeed it is an honour to have been in any way connected. No sooner did a late venerable and excellent divine, (Mr. Venn,) at that time vicar of Huddersfield, hear of it, than with that generosity which ever distinguished him, he instantly resolved to present Mr. Powley to the first vacant chapelry in his church. About three years elapsed from the time of Mr. Powley's entering into holy orders, before an opportunity occurred for the fulfilment of this kind intention, during which time he was employed by the Reverend Brooke Bridges as his curate at Wadenhoe, in Northamptonshire. At length the perpetual curacy of Slaitwaite, in the parish of Huddersfield, becoming vacant, he was licensed to it in the year 1767, upon the nomination of the vicar."

He was then in bad health, and compelled in consequence to leave his cure for awhile, just after he had entered upon it, and try the effect of his native air. Writing to him, August 23, 1767, at Langwathby, near Penrith, (whither he had gone to visit his relations,) Mr. Newton says, "I read your letter at the Great Room. Our people feel and pray for you, and remember your labours among them with much affection. I thank the Lord, and I thank you as the instrument, that when I came home from Yorkshire, I found them all in peace, and in general in a thriving way. You will always be a welcome visitant at Olney to the people, and particularly to your affectionate friend and brother."

It appears that he went to the Hotwells from thence, and that finding no benefit from the waters there, he derived it from travelling and change of air. Becoming acquainted with Lady Huntingdon, (no doubt through Mr. Haweis's means,) he officiated in her chapel at Bath; and that "the Elect Lady," (as she was called by her flatterers,) highly valued his labours and his correspondence, these extracts from her own letters to him will show.

Feb. 18, 1768.

The situation of my health will excuse my not before this acknowledging your very Christian and obliging letter, and the blessings the Lord has been graciously pleased to convey through your ministry at Bath. I will first praise him for his mercy and goodness to us, and next highly esteem you for your work's sake, which in faithfulness and godly simplicity *He has and does so own.* The respect I bear you as a minister, the approbation *I have of you* as a man of sense, and the apparent devotedness of

your heart to the Lord, all concur in making me lament your not continuing with me.

Brighthelmstone, June 25, 1768.

I had from Mr. Lloyd to-day a letter, which informs me of your kind intention of fulfilling your obliging engagement of serving the people of Sussex. I am very sensible of this instance of your love, and agree to your time that shall be most convenient. I wrote to Mr. Venn, hoping that by friends and some help in the neighbourhood, your church may be supplied. Mr. Buckley I am sure will help, and Mr. Crook of Leeds, (?) at my request; for our present engagements are so great that we shall not know how to supply our calls and part with any of the assistants that I have: but I pray many may be made willing to help us. Do stay as long as you can when you do come, which will add greatly to the obligation of, dear Sir,

Your obliged friend, S. HUNTINGDON.

Your very sweet letter I have this moment received; it has been a fresh trial of my faith on this occasion. As I loved and honoured you before, you claim a double portion from all God's faithful people, and among the least of these I desire[6] to be ranked. The cool reception you met with plainly shows the fire was in your heart, they feared from you might be kindled in theirs. Alas, what is all this, my dear Sir? those eyes which are as a flame of fire searching our hearts, cannot behold all this without those eyes of glory being provoked. O my dear Sir, may every charge of blackness attend your character which is, or can be a means of preserving your precious heart faithful in the Lord's sight!

I have repeated accounts of the love honour and respect which our dear people at Bath have to your ministry.

On his return to Slaithwaite, Mr. Newton wrote to congratulate him on his restoration to his people. "I hope," he says, "the Lord will bless you in your habitation, and I shall not be sorry to hear that he is providing you a suitable housekeeper in your house. A partner to share in your comforts and your cares would possibly make your life more agreeable in many respects. If you think so likewise, and commit it to him in prayer, He who provided well for Isaac and Jacob, can likewise provide for you. I think it good news when I hear that a minister, especially a young man, is suitably and prudently married.

"I can with truth assure you that your ministry was both acceptable and profitable to our people. A young lad about fourteen was awakened under you at Olney. He lives at Piddington, about seven miles off, and as the distance is too great for him to attend here statedly, he was lately admitted a member in a Dissenting church at Road, the minister of which is a good man. I have heard that the lad gave a very solid and satisfactory account of his experience when he was received, and that he continues to go on very steadily and well. He has been at Olney two or three times since, and some of our people like him much, but he did not fall in my way. Mr. Carey's maid was under some convictions while you were here, though she seemed to lose them afterwards; but I hope of late

[6] *Lady Huntingdon's handwriting is so difficult, that I cannot be certain whether the word is intended for desire or deserve.*

the Lord has been pleased to meet with her again, and I hope she is now in good earnest."

This was soon followed by some advice, characteristically given, concerning the management of his recovered strength. "Use," said Mr. Newton, "all prudent and proper precautions for the preservation of your health, and then be not solicitous about it. It is in the Lord's hands, who upon your first entrance to your parish, brought you down to the borders of the grave, and then brought you up, to show by both what he can do. It would be in vain to try to save ourselves by balking the calls of duty, (I hope he has taught us better than to desire it;) for he could send us sickness in a moment. And on the other hand we need not fear to trust ourselves with him in his service. While he has work for you, you shall find the promise of a renewal of strength to those who wait upon him, made good in both senses to body and soul. If you should have some attendant pains and complaints, it is not, you know, for want of power or love in your great Physician to keep you from them, but because his wisdom sees it best, that a part of your needful cross should be that way. And it is more honourable, as well as more comfortable, to wear out than to rust out. Yet after all, I recommend a prudential regard, to beware of taking colds, and not to hazard your health by labouring beyond your necessary occasions, and the measure of strength he gives you. You have in Mr. Venn an instance that it is not desireable to light the candle at both ends at once. Could he once have held his activity under more restraint, it would have saved him and his many friends much uneasiness. And yet his wounds are honourable wounds; he received them in a good cause, and for a good master. And I think the infirmities of a good constitution broken in the service of the Gospel, must be much less painful than the reflection of having selfishly and fearfully deprived ourselves of opportunities of serving the Lord through an overtenderness for our own dear persons."

His marriage with Miss Unwin, to whom he had been introduced in consequence of his cooperating in Mr. Newton's ministerial operations, took place in 1774. And the time of his residence at Slaithwaite "he was always accustomed to consider as the happiest portion of his life. He was there stationed among a people who knew how to estimate his worth, and his labours were abundantly blessed to the conversion and edification of his hearers." The following letter from one of his correspondents shows that those labours were sometimes extended beyond the bounds of his own cure, and that he was threatened with some proceedings in consequence.

TO THE REV. MR. POWLEY, AT SLAITHWAITE, NEAR HUDDERSFIELD.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Leeds, June 22, 1772.

Shall I rejoice that you are brought to suffer for the Lord's sake, or lament that there is so much bitterness in the hearts of our brethren in the flesh, that they will not allow us peaceably to discharge the office which both they and we engaged so solemnly in at our ordination? As you are threatened with a prosecution, I imagine it is some brother clergyman that is stirred up against you, as it was against our dear friend Milner. In your cases I think there is some difference; whether that will make

any difference in the legality of your proceedings I know not; but if I rightly understood my friend, I apprehend it will not. When Milner was prosecuted, it was for calling *his own people* together *in his own parish* to exhort them, and pray with them, which he did in the week days, because in winter time he was obliged to get a neighbouring curate to preach to them, the place being too far from Hull for him to serve it and be in time to preach his lecture in the afternoon. The clergyman (one Mr. H——, a very debauched man,) who prosecuted him, went upon the Conventicle Act. Joseph was summoned by writ to appear at the sessions to answer to the crimes of praying with and exhorting his people which were laid to his charge. He appeared undaunted, and on examination pleaded guilty of those *heinous crimes;* but at the same time addressed the magistrates on the bench, desiring them to beware what they did. He was conscious he had done no more than his duty, and was determined in meekness to vindicate what he had done. They pleaded a breach of the Conventicle Act. He apprehended that Act was levelled at the secret combinations of the popish priests at the time it was enacted, and did not mean to lay any restrictions upon the conduct of regular and serious clergy in our own church. They found he talked like one that understood more of the law than they did themselves, and therefore would have dismissed him, on condition he would acknowledge he had done wrong, and was sorry for it. He was very far from acknowledging any such thing. He stood at Cæsar's judgement seat, and he told them was determined to be tried by the law. If that was against him, he would willingly submit to the punishment it should inflict; if it acquitted him, he should be glad his brethren should know it, who had entered into the ministry not for filthy lucre's sake, but out of love to souls. The justices finding him determined, begun to think it was time to draw their own necks out of the halter, and, therefore, after consulting what they should do, they pretended to find a flaw in the writ, and so quashed the indictment. Thus our friend was dismissed without further trouble.

He had got Lord Mansfield's opinion, who has had trials before him of the same nature, and has given it as his opinion, that the Conventicle Act never was intended to interfere with our own clergy. Mr. Romaine says, that a clergyman might (for any law subsisting to the contrary) preach any where in his own parish or *out of his own parish. sub dio,* without interruption, provided he did not trespass upon any one's property, &c. &c. Mr. Whitefield was prosecuted upon that more than once, but always was acquitted. I would therefore advise you not to fear your enemies, but for your better intelligence write to Mr. Thornton. He gave Milner his intelligence. The Lord be with you and bless you in all your proceedings. The intelligence I have given you in regard to Mr. Romaine's opinion, Mr. Whitefield's trials, and Lord Mansfield, I have copied from Milner's letter, who desired me in that letter to publish our power to our serious brethren.

M. A.

In 1777 Mr. Powley was presented by the king to the vicarage of Dewsbury, through the Earl of Dartmouth's interest. The writer who drew up the account of him in the Christian Observer had "often," he says, "*known* him to derive comfort amidst many sorrows, from the reflection

that his presentation to Dewsbury came to him perfectly unsolicited, and without interference of any kind on his part." In the year following he consulted Mr. Newton upon a matter connected with his rights and duties as vicar of that place. Mr. Newton's reply was preserved among his papers.

TO THE REV. MATTHEW POWLEY, DEWSBURY, YORKSHIRE.

DEAR SIR, August 8, 1778.

I wished to answer your letter immediately; I do answer it as soon as I can, or rather acknowledge it; for to the chief point in it I know not what answer to give, nor need I be ashamed of my ignorance, for Mr. Cowper seems as much at a loss about it as myself.

Something, however, must be said. What you ought to do, I dare not be positive; but I can see one thing you ought not to do,—namely, not to go to law with Sir G. A. Perhaps you cannot do better than to defer all determination till the case happens, and you are under a necessity of acting; committing it in the mean time to the Lord, who has all hearts and events in His hands, who may perhaps in his providence cause some circumstances yet unforeseen to coincide with the vacancy, which may give a plain and pointed direction to your part in the affair.

But supposing it vacant, and every thing else just as it is now, what is to be done? Were the case my own, supposing my right to present indisputable, I should look out for a proper person to offer it to. There are sometimes, and possibly at this time, young men in college, of competent fortunes, who are more solicitous for an open door than a good salary, because they can do without the latter. If such a one would accept your chapelry, Sir G——'s right to withhold the stipend might be talked over afterwards, and with more propriety perhaps by him than by yourself.

You will likewise consider what probability there is of bringing matters amicably to bear by a personal interview with Sir George. Nor do I think it would be an artifice to be ashamed of, (supposing you knew no such person of fortune,) if you fix your eye upon one whom you think suitable, and then let him make interest if he can to come to you through Sir George's recommendation. If you could please him without displeasing yourself, by disposing of the first, you might have a more favourable opportunity for ascertaining the rights of the vicar of Dewsbury, and the curate of Hartshed, at one and the same time.

If after all Sir G—— should persist in recommending one whom you could not in conscience accept, the case speaks for itself,—you must not hurt your own conscience or character to please Sir G——. The only alternative would be to let it lapse to the archbishop. If this was necessary I should think it might be done with such protestations, and details of facts, as might prevent its being used as a prejudice to future vicars. Were things verging to this issue I would wait on the archbishop, and endeavour by a plain undisguised account of matters to gain his confidence, and at the same time to leave with him briefly, but solemnly, the reasons why I durst not be instrumental in appointing an improper person to a cure of souls. Who knows but you might drop something upon this subject, (when properly called to it,) which might find its way to the heart of even an archbishop? Put your trust in the Bishop of souls, and he will

bear you through. And I have observed where His cause and service are concerned, simplicity moderation and steadiness have done great and unexpected things.

I wish you likewise just to keep in your eye—the possibility that a man of Sir George's choosing might be the Lord's choice. If you find it most expedient in other respects to oblige Sir G——, and observe the person he proposes to have something hopeful and encouraging about him, I would not have you hastily refuse him merely because he has not attained to a certain standard. Mr. Scott, my neighbour at Weston, was under the Lord's teaching, when hardly any one but myself would believe it, he was so very dark in many things. He now preaches the Gospel as clearly, and with as great a prospect of usefulness, as any one. So it was likewise with Mr. Cadogan. Had Reading been at my disposal, and I had given it him, I should have had all the professing world upon my back; and yet perhaps the event proves, or will prove, that he was the most proper person in the kingdom to have it, and that the thing was of the Lord. Consult your own heart and feelings: seek the Lord by prayer. Take that course at last which you verily believe will be most pleasing to Him, and you will find it right in the end, whether it pleases your fellow worms, or not.

I have only time to say with regard to Slaithwaite, that I am glad no more harm was done. It is a mercy to be kept from such alarms in public worship. We are liable to them every time we meet, and they are very distressing.

We join in love to you and Mrs. Powley.

I am sincerely yours, J. NEWTON.

Mr. Thornton was also consulted upon this matter, and returned this judicious reply, (Nov. 6, 1779).

"Respecting the perplexing business of Hartshead, I should hope with prudence and firmness, yet doing all with a becoming kindness and meekness, the difficulty will be less than you apprehend. We often make ourselves troubles, or increase them, by inconsideration and hastiness. You happily steer clear of this danger, and I trust the others will vanish. I should recommend the making the archbishop your friend, and going to him for the information you want about the income, which will carry a much better face than enquiring it out privately; and this may be done by letter as soon as the vacancy happens, if his grace is in town, or it does not suit you to go to him. I think what has been given by Queen Anne's bounty, and the like sum added by Sir George, can't but go to the incumbent, and indeed everything else that is not by way of present. Yet it seems wisest to endeavour to gain his favour: and therefore, though I would insist on maintaining my right and presenting myself, I would send the person to him for his approval; and if one was disagreeable to him, I would send another, and a third and so on till I was happy enough to obtain his approval; and if he should prove absurdly unreasonable after your repeated endeavours and study to obtain his favour, then you will be justified in the sight of all, in fixing a proper person, of a truly loving mild cast, that you think will adorn the Gospel of Christ in all things."

It has been seen in Cowper's correspondence that Mr. Powley was dissuaded by him and Mr. Newton from commencing a controversy with Mr.

Fletcher upon the methodistical tenet of Perfection. His opinions indeed were decidedly Calvinistic, and he was a leading member of the Elland Society. The advice of his friends on this occasion saved him probably from some mortification, and certainly from much disquietude. "For meekness and humbleness of mind," says the Christian Observer, "for sincerity and integrity of heart and life, for love to God and to the souls of men, and for a faithful and laborious discharge of his professional duties, the subject of this memoir was eminently distinguished. His latter years however, notwithstanding the amiable qualities of his mind and the unblameableness of his life, were rendered extremely painful and distressing to him by the perverseness and ingratitude of the people amongst whom he dwelt and laboured, and whose welfare was the object of all others the nearest to his heart. But it is to be hoped that many of those who opposed and persecuted him when living, may learn to reverence his character, and to value the truths which he taught and exemplified, now that he is no more.—In compliance with his dying wish a petition was drawn up in behalf of his curate, and signed by upwards of a thousand resident housekeepers, which was presented by Mr. Fawkes, (one of the county members,) to Lord Grenville, in whom, as prime minister, the right of nomination to the living, on Mr. Powley's death, was vested. The prayer of the petition, (to the honour of Lord Grenville be it spoken,) was no sooner made known to him than it was complied with; and Mr. Powley had the heartfelt satisfaction of knowing before he breathed his last that, at the urgent request of his parishioners themselves, his living was assured to the very person whom he had wished to succeed him. 'Bless God!' he had yet strength to exclaim when the tidings reached him; 'Praise God!' and shortly afterwards he entered into his rest.

"He was interred on Monday, Dec. 26, (1806,) his pall being supported by forty neighbouring clergymen, and an immense number of his parishioners attending him to the grave; and on the following Sunday at least three thousand persons are said to have assembled at his funeral sermon."

Mrs. Powley survived him nearly nine and twenty years. They had no children; and about six years after his death she went to reside with Mr. Kilvington, to whom her husband had given the perpetual curacy of Osset. From that place Mr. Kilvington removed to Ripon, where he built and endowed a handsome church, and where Mrs. Powley died, Nov. 9, 1835, aged eighty-nine. For many years she had looked upon Mr. Kilvington as her best friend, almost idolizing him, and he repaid her with unvarying attention and affection. Her state of mind was uniformly comfortable and happy; but for some months her intellects had failed, so much so that though Mr. Kilvington died in January, she never understood that he was dead, continually asked for him, and supposed that he was absent on a missionary tour. She had some yearly income; and from her large subscriptions to all the great public charities, and her private benefactions to "suffering Christians," she was considered rich; but this was not the case.

Her will, which had been written some time ago, was characteristic and singular. She specified the number and names of the old women who were to bear *her pall, the kind* of coffin and the wood of which it was to be

made, the hymns which were to be sung at her funeral, and the particular tunes, and the text on which Mr. Kilvington was to preach her funeral sermon, addressing it particularly to the unawakened. Everything was to be extremely plain, and no scarfs, or gloves, or refreshments to be given; but each of the old women to be rewarded with a dark gown and bonnet, a Bible, and a copy of Boston's Fourfold State. The funeral sermon was performed by my friend and late neighbour, Mr. Whiteside, who had just entered upon the church as Mr. Kilvington's successor. Mrs. Kilvington wished that her late friend's directions should be precisely observed in all points; and it was with no little trouble that some obsolete tunes could be revived for the occasion.

Mrs. Powley's feelings towards Cowper were not altogether friendly. She revered him as a man, but complained that her mother had wasted eighteen hundred pounds of her property upon him,—a complaint which was introduced into the account of Mr. Powley in the Christian Observer. The sacrifices which had been made on Cowper's part seem to have been overlooked.

Cowper and Newton's advice concerning Mr. Powley's Anti-Perfectionism, p. 144.—Mr. Powley received the following letter to the same tenour from another of his most esteemed friends.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Hotham, Aug. 29, 1784.

I received both your letter and your three MSS., and according to your desire have looked over them (in part.) The remainder shall yet have my inspection, if I can; but I fear to keep them too long from you, and from better judges. I have given two of them over into the hands of our friend, Mr. M., as desired, and doubt not he will read them properly. As to my own part, I am a poor person to employ in such a work, and therefore can give no opinion worth placing any dependance upon. But one thing I would observe, as a *friend to Christian peace, i. e.* that I am against the publication of the two folios altogether. For don't think it any affront to the writer when I say *Cui bono?* I know good, much good, may be apprehended and intended, but I really entirely doubt that it will follow. Don't think I mean to depreciate its merit; no, 'tis on far other grounds I speak. I acknowledge it shows the great pains and reading of the author, and think it has many just and useful things in it, and, as far as I see, has truth on its side in general; yet I say *Cui bono?* still. If the design is to convince the partisans of the doctrine, this will be *opus inane insumere;* if to prevent wavering minds, few such may ever read it, or receive it as it is designed. In short, I have such a dread of raising the Devil again, that I should be sorry (for one) to see it come out. When I reflect on the years that are past, and the unhappy state of things in the polemical disputes of those days, and the bad consequences which ensued, I dread to see the church's wounds, scarce yet healed, torn open again, and fresh hostilities commenced by the pen of one I love: for such will be the certain effect. Though the work may be well designed, it will provoke an answer, and not only your own spirits will be embittered, but those of *thousands* filled with the worst of all wrath against one another. Think; —*stop in time*,—is my advice. As to what my general objection to it is,—

it is too long and tedious, and such as will not be an object of sale. Some things bear rather too hard upon Mr. Fletcher, whose excellence all acknowledge, having conclusions from his tenets which affect his person or state too severely, and ranking him with men of very different character. But I would suppose you do not design it; yet will it not be so misunderstood? But it is needless for me to give my judgment, who am against it *ex toto*. Have you forgot what dear Mr. Venn, with the rest of us, said at the beginning of the late war? viz. That it was God's scourge upon us very principally for those divisions and altercations which had rent the church. And has God by means of those afflictions which he has sent upon us in the late war turned our minds to other things, and caused us to drop these at length, and now when He has indulged us with peace once again, shall we go immediately to the old work? But you will say, Is there not a cause? —I say it is an *ostensive* one, and such as may serve to promote Satan's end, though you mean no such thing. And in my humble opinion the doctrine will go on just the same, after all you have said, as it did before.

I hope few, very few indeed, abuse it as you seem to apprehend. Consequences may often be drawn from our premises which we never mean, and even abhor. But *my* comfort and confidence is, there is *a God reigns over all*. He will take care of his church, whether as a collective body of professors at large, or as including the real church, those few chosen ones, who are His of every persuasion. *Let* us go on preaching the plain truth in our way according as it appears to us, and let us leave others to Him. Oh may our merciful Lord pardon both their and our blunders, for we are all full of them. I know this is not fashionable in the west; but, Powley, this is my *soul's language*. I have seen an end of all *perfection*, not sinless perfection *only*, but of all; and if I can find a little good amongst a deal of ignorance and mistake, it is as much as I can expect or look for.

Your affectionate friend, J. STILLINGFLEET.

I could not help laughing at the picture you have drawn of the musical convicts. The subject indeed is aweful, and your manner of representing it is perfectly just; yet I laughed, and must have laughed had I been one of your hearers. To Mr. Newton. P. 128.

The passage to which Cowper alludes is the commencement of Mr. Newton's fourth sermon on the Messiah

"Whereunto shall we liken the people of this generation, and to what are they like?" Luke vii. 31. I represent to myself a number of persons of various characters, involved in one common charge of high treason. They are already in a state of confinement, but not yet brought to their trial. The facts, however, are so plain, and the evidence against them so strong and pointed, that there is not the least doubt of their guilt being fully proved, and that nothing but a pardon can preserve them from punishment. In this situation, it should seem their wisdom to avail themselves of every expedient in their power for obtaining mercy. But they are entirely regardless of their danger, and wholly taken up with contriving methods of amusing themselves, that they may pass away the term of their imprisonment with as much cheerfulness as possible. Among other resources they call in the assistance of music; and amidst a great variety of

subjects in this way, they are particularly pleased with one. They choose to make the solemnities of their impending trial, the character of their judge, the method of his procedure, and the aweful sentence to which they are exposed, the ground-work of a musical entertainment; and, as if they were quite unconcerned in the event, their attention is chiefly fixed upon the skill of the composer, in adapting the style of his music to the very solemn language and subject with which they are trifling. The king, however, out of his great clemency and compassion towards those who have no pity for themselves, prevents them with his goodness. Undesired by them, he sends them a gracious message: he assures them that he is unwilling they should suffer; he requires, year he entreats them to submit. He points out a way in which their confession and submission shall be certainly accepted; and in this way, which he condescends to prescribe, he offers them a free and a full pardon. But instead of taking a single step towards a compliance with his goodness, they set his message likewise to music; and this, together with a description of their present state, and of the fearful doom awaiting them if they continue obstinate, is sung for their diversion, accompanied with the sound of cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of instruments.

Bishop Bagot, p. 163.—Giving his reasons to Mr. Unwin for the compliment which he had paid to this prelate in his Tirocinium, Cowper says, "he had been rudely and coarsely treated in the Monthly Review, on account of a sermon which appeared to me, when I read their extract from it, to deserve the highest commendation, as exhibiting explicit proof both of his good sense and his unfeigned piety."

The attack which provoked Cowper's indignation was made in an article upon the "Discourses on the Prophecies concerning the first Establishment and subsequent History of Christianity," preached at Lincoln's Inn Chapel by Dr. Bagot, at that time dean of Christ Church. The following extracts from that article will justify Cowper's feelings upon the subject, and exemplify the spirit in which the Monthly Review was conducted for more than half a century

"The design of the fifth discourse is to show, that the deliverance to be wrought by the Messiah was of a spiritual nature; a deliverance from the power and consequences of sin and wickedness. And here the preacher, like a true and faithful son of the church, is a warm advocate for the doctrine of atonement, by a vicarious punishment; but he only repeats what has been often said; and what good purpose can be answered by such repetition we cannot conceive. Such doctrines appear to us to have no foundation in Scripture, and to be utterly repugnant to the principles of common sense. But we must not treat them with too much severity out of tenderness to our grandmothers, as the good old ladies may possibly derive great consolation from them. Perhaps, too, the doctor himself was influenced by some such *pious* motives; if so, his *piety* will, no doubt be properly rewarded.

"The doctor tell us, that our established church maintains, in its creeds and articles, those very doctrines which have been held forth by the mouth *of the* prophets since the world began, as the essential doctrines of that

faith by which all men should be saved. We should be cautious, he says, of admitting any alterations in an establishment which has for ages secured the TRUTH to us, amidst the repeated and violent attacks of enemies of different complexions and different denominations. He further observes, that we have of late been loudly called upon; that the principles of the Reformation are pleaded in behalf of farther changes; and that the moderation of some among us would lead them to attempt to silence clamour, by making concessions in points of indifference. But it should be remembered, we are told, that points actually indifferent are never the objects of clamour; whatever its pretensions may be, it always really means something more. Indeed it hath now spoken out, the doctor says; and it is become evident, that the principles on which the Reformation formerly proceeded, plead now with equal force against the alterations contended for. The great truths of the Gospel were the objects then, and are so now. Moderation, pretended with respect to these, should be called by another name.

"Such is the spirit that breathes through this performance. We have heard of clergymen who were fierce *for* moderation; but Dr. Bagot is fierce, very fierce indeed *against* it. It may be proper, however, to acquaint him, that some of the brightest ornaments of the church, in the highest stations too, for whose learning, abilities, and virtues, our author professes the greatest regard, make no scruple of declaring that both our articles and liturgy stand much in need of reformation. Dr. Bagot may call the *moderation* of such persons by whatever name he pleases; in our opinion it does them great honour. We have an extensive acquaintance among the clergy, and have the satisfaction to know that almost all of them, how much soever they may differ in other matters, agree in this,—that a reformation is earnestly to be wished for. There are no doubt several reasons which may be assigned for that indifference to religion, so visible to every eye, and for the wide spread of infidelity; but he must be little acquainted with the spirit of the present times who does not see that both the one and the other are, in some considerable degree, owing to the gross absurdity and unintelligible jargon of some of those articles of our church, to which an unfeigned assent is required by all those who minister in it. As men generally take their notions of Christianity, not from the scriptures, but from creeds, formularies, and confessions of faith, if the doctrines contained in our articles, taken in their plain and obvious sense, are the genuine doctrines of Christianity, is it to be wondered at that the number of unbelievers is so great?"—Vol. lxiv. pp. 414—416.

"The brothers," says Cowper of the Bagots, "were all five my schoolfellows, and very amiable and valuable boys they were." Lewis Bagot was elected from Westminister to Christ Church in 1764; was made canon of Christ Church in the room of Dr. Moore, archbishop of Canterbury, and dean on the installation of Dr. Markham to the see of York. In 1782 he became bishop of Bristol, was translated to Norwich the year following, and to St. Asaph in 1790. There he rebuilt the palace, on a plan suited to the situation, 'where among the mountains, and in the vicinity of the sea, storms are often violent.' It is a low building on the slope of a hill; the *vestibule, dining-room*, and drawing room, which occupy the whole front,

are on a level with the first floor in the other apartments." He died in 1802.

A correspondent of Mr. Nichols says, in an account of this excellent prelate, "Similitude of character is sometimes the result of original impressions, and sometimes the effect of studious imitation. It was perhaps owing to both these causes that Bishop Bagot, in the mildness of his manners and placid benevolence, was reckoned strongly to resemble his most esteemed friend the late Dr. Townson, rector of Malpas and archdeacon of Richmond. When the latter was rector of Blithfield, the other, then a mere boy, would often steal down to the parsonage, and read there with his friend for hours together, with avidity and attention worthy of riper years. The friendship between them, which commenced thus early, terminated only in the grave. The deceased prelate wrote a most beautiful hand, which seems to be a family excellence; as the late Lord Bagot wrote a very fair hand, like the bishop's, and like his brother's, the present rector[6] of Blithfield, and all of them reminded one of the strokes of *his* hand, now motionless in death, who was once their venerable pastor, and always their intimate and dear friend.

"As a patron, the late Bishop of St. Asaph is commended for bestowing the ample patronage of his see with great disinterestedness and impartiality not upon aliens, whether relatives or others, but among the learned and meritorious clergy of the diocese, acquainted with the language and manners of the district."—*Nichols's Literary Anecdotes*, vol. v. pp. 630-1.

"My father," says Miss Seward, "used to say (of Lord Bagot) he was the most classically learned nobleman he knew; and he has much engaging benevolence in his countenance and manners; but exteriorly more broken and infirm than belongs to his time of life,—to autumnal years, on the verge of winter. The sobriety of his youth gave him a prospect of age that should prove like a lusty winter, 'frosty, but kindly.' I fear it may not be. Many and severe have been his filial losses, and grief rivals the debilitating pleasures in its power of antedating decline."—*Letters*, vol. iv. p. 384 (1797).

Letters of Literature, p. 217.—This book which provoked Cowper's astonishment and indignation was written by Pinkerton, though it was said in the title-page to be by Robert Heron, Esq. He assumed the name of Heron because it was his mother's. An unfavourable opinion was formed of the author, from the spirit in which the book was written, and the opinions which were implied in it; and an unfortunate Robert Heron, who began his literary career about the same time, and whose sad story has been recorded by Mr. D'Israeli as an example of "the Calamities of Authors[7]," is said to have suffered by the prejudice which had been thus excited against his name.

6 Cowper's correspondent.

7 Vol. i. pp. 218—25. The reader may find there "the Case of a Man of Letters, of regular education, living by honest literary industry:"—a statement drawn up by Heron himself, when, having suffered for ten months "the very extremity of bodily and pecuniary distress," he was under arrest for debt. It concludes with the words, "I shudder at the thought of perishing in a gaol." About three months afterwards he died in Newgate,—the victim not of his own vices, nor of his follies, but of his devotion to a profession, in which even considerable attainments like his, and severer industry than the hardest taskmaster requires from his slaves, could not preserve him from utter destitution.

Horace Walpole expressed a very flattering opinion of this book to the author. He says, "I scarce ceased from reading till I had finished it; so admirable I found it, and so full of good sense, brightly delivered. Nay, I am pleased with myself too, for having formed the same opinions with you on several points, in which we do not agree with the generality of men. On some topics, I confess frankly, I do not concur with you; considering how many you have touched, it would be wonderful if we agreed on all, or I should not be sincere if I said I did. There are others on which I have formed no opinion; for I should give myself an impertinent air, with no truth, if I pretended to have any knowledge of many subjects, of which, young as you are, you seem to have made yourself master. Indeed, I have gone deeply into nothing, and therefore shall not discuss those heads on which we differ most; as probably I should not defend my own opinions well. I assure you I could write a letter ten times as long, if I were to specify all I like in your work. I more than like most of it, and I am charmed with your glorious love of liberty, and your other humane and noble sentiments[8]."

George Hardinge, also, is said to have been an admirer of these Letters of Literature They bore marks of considerable reading, and of greater pretensions;—of much ability, and of more presumptuousness. The author considered Pindar as "extravagance itself," and said that Dryden's Ode was worth all Pindar's, "as a large diamond is worth a vast heap of gold." Upon Petrarch he says, "the stated form and measure of the sonnet is so disgustingly similar, that I believe no man of genius would now write twenty in a life time." He speakes with contempt of Cardinal de Retz's Memoirs; says that Moliere, in attempting to introduce laughter into the French comedy, blundered upon mere farce; praises Jean Baptiste Rousseau as one of those writers without whom the French would have no poetry; suspects that the fame of Thomson's Seasons would not last long; and censures Goldsmith's two comedies, as being "composed of low humour and dullness and absurdity, more dull and absurd than English sentimental comedy itself." "Style," he said, "had preserved Herodotus in spite of his absurdities; and style had saved Virgil entirely, who has not the most distant pretence to any other attribute of a poet. Indeed," said he, "I never look into Virgil but with utter disgust." Yet he was sometimes right in his critical opinions: he praised the Castle of Indolence; he vindicated Tasso against Boileau and Addison; he always found fresh delight in reading Homer. The better parts of the book, indeed, deserved the praise which Horace Walpole bestowed upon it.

The passage which most offended Cowper (and most justly) was that in which Pinkerton involved the scriptural poetry in the condemnation which he passed upon eastern writings in general. "In all ages," he says, "the poetry of the Asiatics has been strained to bombast, and glittering with all the beauties of absurdity, from the most ancient epoch down to our own times." One who is unacquainted with the Oriental languages may be inclined to agree in this opinion, judging by what has been translated, but there are large allowances to be made; and nothing is more remarkable

[8] Pemberton's Correspondence, vol. i. p. 67—9.

than the difference between the Hebrew and all other Oriental poetry,—the Canticles alone excepted. Pinkerton, however, attacked those writers who, "in their fondness of enthusiasm," he said, "would fain find holy writ as eminent in composition as in sanctity. When they attempt to debauch our taste by commenting on the beautiful and grand passages of scripture, they are forced to relinquish every rule of sound sense." "But I am afraid of being tedious upon a subject so clear, and shall return in observing, that for absurd and filthy imagery, (witness some parts of Ezekiel, the best of the sacred writers,) the scripture yields to no composition in any language; but of sublime or beautiful style, I can from that work produce no proofs. Writers who hold it up in that ludicrous view, do as great harm to religion as to good taste: it resembles the dressing of a pious and worthy clergyman in the garments of a hero, or of a lovely woman; and then telling us he hath the sublimity of the one and the beauty of the other, whereas it only puts him in an awkward light, and brings derision and contempt upon his holy character."

The most remarkable part of Pinkerton's book is his scheme for improving and fixing the English language,—a scheme which will always secure for these Letters a place among the Curiosities of Literature. The plan was, "that the king should incorporate one hundred, or indeed all, of the most learned men in the kingdom, or they should associate themselves, under the name of The Academy for Improving the Language. The great intent should be to soften and tune the English speech as much as possible: new modes of spelling, and new uses of vowels ought to be adopted. The Academy should publish a grammar and dictionary, in which the new orthography should be used; and all the members, and indeed all the *literati* in the kingdom, should unite to assert their proper power over the mob.—And perhaps a thousand years hence, when the British power may be no more, the language would survive; an event, which it may be feared, cannot be effected even by Milton and Shakespeare, if the speech remain in its present rude state. The sole intention should be to improve our orthography, and give us a number of vowel terminations. The *é* should in particular be always pronounced as in *the*. I look upon Greek as the most perfect language, both for strength and melody, that ever was known: now in Greek, I have found that the vowel terminations of words, taken as they run in any book, are equal to one third of the language. In English they amount but to one fourth: it follows that we want vowel terminations for about eight thousand words. How are they to be supplied?

"Suppose *a* for all plurals instead of *s*,—*pena* for *pens*, *papera* for *papers*, &c. *O* is a fine close, and very rare in our language. Suppose it given to all substantives ending in harsh consonants, as in *b*, *crabo*, *stabo*, *webo*; in *c*, *publico*; in *d*, *commando*; in *g*, *flago*, *eggo*; in *m*, *epigramo*; in *p*, *carpo*; in *t*, *anto*, *facto*. The *ch* is shocking and *ch*ocking, and throwing out the *h* is entitled to *o* even in adjectives, as *leeco* for *leech*, *rico* for *rich*. The *ck* is horrid, and must omit the *k* in every instance, and take the *o* in all adjectives and substantives, as *quaco*, *saco*." Passing over other rules of alteration, it will suffice to exhibit part of a well known paper in the Spectator, as translated by the improver himself into the improved language.

"When I waz ato Grand Cairo, I picked up several orientala manuscripta, whica I havé still by me. Among othera, I met with oné entitulen Thea Visiona of Mirza, whica I havé redd ové with great pleasuré. I intend to givé ito to the publico, when I havé no other entertainmento fo them; ando shall begin with the first vision, whico I havé translaten wordo fo wordo az followeth.

"On the fifth day of the moon whico, according to the customo of mya foréfathera, I alway keep holi, aftero having washen myself, ando offeren up mya morninga devotiona, I ascended thea hia hilla of Bagdat, in ordeio to pas the resta of the day in meditation ando prayero. Az I waz heré airing myself on thea topo of thea mountaina, I fell into a profound contemplation on the vanité of human lifé; ando passing fro oné thôté to anothero, Surely, said I, man is buto a shadow, ando lifé a dreamo. Whilé I waz thuso musing, I cast mina eyea towardo the summito of a roco, tha waz noto faro fro me, wheré I discovered oné in the habito of a shepherdo, with a letel musical instrumento in his hando. Az I looked upo him, he applied ito to hiza lipa, ando began to play upo ito. The soundo of ito waz exceeding sweet, ando wrôte into a varieté of tuna tha weré inexpressibly melodiouza, ando alto differenta fro any thing I had evé heard. They put me in mindo of thosé heavenlea aira tha aré playen to thea departen soula of good men, upo their first arrival in Paradisé, to wear out thea impressiona of theira lasta agonea, ando qualifie them fo thea pleasura of tha happi placé. My hearto melted away in secreta rapturea."

The Pseudo-Robert Heron received the grateful acknowledgment of one correspondent, who had often "regretted that our nervous language should be so crowded and set a-jar with harsh superfluous consonants, but never hoped to see a scheme advanced to the public effectually to refine and harmonise our northern tongue, by substituting throughout for those grating and hissing finals, melodious vowel terminations. Every person," he said, "who hath an ear in the least attuned to harmony, and hath mastered habitude and prejudice, must be delighted with the improvement illustrated in the subjoined specimen." But he suggested some alterations in the plan, and thought that a *kinda mothera* would be more elegant than a *kindo mothero*, and that the plural might be somewhat diversified, as *kindi fatheri, kindai motherai, honesta shepherda and sheperdeza, honestai shepherdai and shepherdezai.* The old proverb, however, was not verified in this instance, and Pinkerton appears to have made no other convert than this Cornish clergyman.

Horace Walpole had respect enough for Pinkerton's abilities and acquirements to reason with him seriously upon so preposterous a scheme. "To change *s* for *a*," said he, "in the plural number of our substantives and adjectives would be so violent an alteration, that I believe neither the power of Power, nor the power of Genius, would be able to effect it. In most cases I am convinced that very strong innovations are more likely to make impressions than small and almost imperceptible differences, as in religion, medicine, politics, &c.; but I do not think that language can be treated in the same manner, especially in a refined age. When a nation first emerges from barbarism, two or three masterly writers may operate wonders; and the fewer the number of writers, as the number is small th

such a period, the more absolute is their authority. But when a country has been polishing itself for two or three centuries, and when consequently authors are innumerable, the most supereminent genius (or whoever is esteemed so, though without foundation,) possesses very limited empire, and is far from meeting implicit obedience. Every petty writer will contest very novel institutions; every inch of change in any language will be disputed; and the language will remain as it were longer than the tribunal which should dictate very heterogeneous alterations. With regard to adding *a* or *o* to final consonants, consider, sir, should the usage be adopted, what havoc would it make! All our poetry would be defective in metre, or would become at once as obsolete as Chaucer; and could we promise ourselves that, though we should acquire better harmony, and more rhymes, we should have a new crop of poets, to replace Milton, Dryden, Gray, and —I am sorry you will not allow me to add—Pope? You might enjoin our prose to be reformed, as you have done by the Spectator; but try Dryden's Ode by your new institution[9]."

These remarks, thus kindly and indeed condescendingly offered by one whose place in literature and in public opinion entitled him to respect, had probably their due weight. But follies of this kind are soon outgrown. Pinkerton became a considerable person in his day, and, notwithstanding all his faults, rendered some service to the history and the literature of his country.

Odour of the soil, p. 233.—On this subject I have met with a curious passage in the Conde de Mora's *Historia de la Imperial Ciudad de Toledo.*

"*A una legua deste lugar (de Malamoneda) ay un valle, que le llaman Oledor, ò Oledero, por lo mucho que reconocen oler bien los que passan por el en qualquier tiempo del año; y queriendo reconocer este olor, se passa muy aprisa. Y para satisfacerse de que olor sea, un religioso de el convento de la Sisla de Toledo, de la orden de San Geronimo, quemo todos aquellos berrezales de aquel valle, juzgando fuesse alguna yerva; y despues de quemado, dava el mismo olor; y assi se juzga quo no pued: ser sino algun cuerpo Santo, que Dios tiene alli guardado, que desde la perdida de España està alli escondido, y no se ha dado con el lugar donde està; y su Divina Magestad le descubrirá quando le pareciere mas conveniente.*"—1 parti, l. iii. p. 245.

"A league from Malamoneda, is a valley which they call Oledor, or Oledero, (the redolent,) because of the fragrance perceived there by those who pass through it at any season of the year, and which, when they seek to ascertain from what it proceeds, passes presently away. A monk from the convent of la Sisla de Toledo, of the order of St. Jerome, burnt all the herbage of this valley, thinking it was some plant that occasioned it; but it emitted the same fragrance after the burning, and so it is deemed that it must be some saint's body which God has kept there, and which has been concealed there from the time of the destruction of Spain, the spot not having yet been found; his Divine Majesty will discover it when it may seem to him most convenient."

[9] Pinkerton's Correspondence, p. 68—9.

This is plainly a physical fact, like that which Cowper notices. The note preparation was given in a different manner when a mine of relics was be sprung.

Among the rules which Tansillo gives for purchasing land, he recommends ng a sack or basket with the mould, pouring water on it, and tasting the ision. If it be sweet, the land is good, but if bitter or salt, the farmer l beware of it.

Per prova del sapor, vil sacco o cesta
S'empia di terra, e là dove più avversa
Ella vi pare, ed al fruttar men presta ;
E d'acqua dolce ben da su cospersa,
Premasi il cesto o il sacco, onde trapela
L'umor che fuora a larghe goccie versa :
Indi purgato da stamigna o tela,
In un vaso, qual vin, fatene il saggio ;
E il sapor de la terra ei vi revela.
S'egli ha del dolce, può comprarla uom saggio ;
S'è amaro o salso, al suo signor potrete
Dir, 'frate, addio ! che sete più non aggio ;
Che estinta m'ha questo licor la sete
Del poder vostro che m'avea sì acceso,
Qual fontana d'Ardenna, o rio di Lete.
Tansillo, Il Podere, cap. ii.

Ye indeed (Horace) *recommends nine years imprisonment of your ses before you send them abroad; but the ninth part of that time is, elieve, as much as there is need of to open a man's eyes upon his a defects, and to secure him from the danger of premature self-robation*, p. 319.—This is the subject of one of John Byrom's critical quisitions in rhyme. The poems of this ingenious and singular d man are properly included in Chalmers's General Collection ; *properly*, ause they have the great and rare merit of originality. Some specimens this piece may perhaps induce the reader to look into his works.

Among other rules which your Horace has writ,
To make his young Piso for poetry fit,
He tells him that verses should not be pursued
When the Muse or Minerva was not in the mood ;
That whate'er he should write, he should let it descend
To the ears of his father, his master, his friend ;
And let it lie by him,—(now prick up your ears !)
Nonumque primatur in annum,—nine years.

Nine years ! I repeat ; for the sound is enough,
With the help of plain sense, to discover the stuff.
If the rule had been true, what a figure would nine
Have made with your Piso's, ye masters of mine !
Must a youth of quick parts, for his verse's perfection,
Let it lie for nine years in the house of correction ?
Nine years if his verses must lie in the leaven,
Take the young rogue himself, and transport him for seven.

To make this a maxim that Horace infuses,
Must provoke all the laughter of all the nine Muses.
How the wits of old Rome, in a case so facetious,
Would have joked upon Horace and Piso and Metius,
If they all could not make a poetical line
Ripe enough to be read, till the year had struck nine!
Had the boy been possessed of nine lives, like a cat,
Yet surely he'd ne'er have submitted to that.

* * * * *

Indeed, says a young one, nine years, I confess,
Is a desperate while for a youth to suppress.
I can hardly think Horace would make it a point;
The word, to be sure, must be out of its joint.

* * * * *

Had he said for nine months, I should think them enew;
This reading is false, sir,—pray tell us the true.
"Why, you are not far off it, if present conjecture
May furnish the place with a probable lecture;
For by copies, I doubt, either printed or written,
The hundred of editors all have been bitten.
Nine months you allow?—yes. Well, let us, for fear
Of affronting Quintilian, e'en make it a year.
Give the critics their *numque*; but as to their *no*—
You have one in plain English more fit to bestow.

I take the correction,—*unumque prematur*,
Let it lie for one twelvemonth:—ay, that may hold water.

* * * * *

They may wrangle and jangle, unwilling to see,
But the thing is as clear as a whistle to me.
This *nonum* of theirs no defence will admit,
Except,—that a blot is no blot, till it's hit:
And now you have hit it, if *nonums* content 'em,
So would, if the verse had so had it, *nonyentum*.

* * * * *

Then blot out this blunder, how here it is hinted,
And by all future printers *unumque* be printed.

The best edition of Byrom's Poems, with a life of the author, and a most characteristic portrait, was published in 1814, by Mr. James Nichols, the translator of Arminius and author of "Calvinism and Arminianism compared," a work of extraordinary research, which throws great light on the religious, and consequently the political, history of England during the reigns of James and Charles I.

The swan is called argutus, *I suppose*, a non arguendo, *and* canorus a non canendo, p. 320.—"The Chevalier de Jaucourt tells us seriously, *that* the swan, whose sweet song is so celebrated by the poets, does not *produce* the sounds by his voice, which is very coarse and disagreeable;

but by his wings, which being raised and extended when he sings, are played upon by the wind, like the Æolian harp, which produce a sound so much the more agreeable, as it is not monotonous, which is the case in the warble of most other birds; but on the contrary, this sound is continually changing, being composed of many different tones, which form a kind of harmony, in proportion as the wind happens to fall on different parts of the wings, and in different positions[10]." "But who," says Dr. Burney, "ever heard this harmony? and why was it more remarkable in the *dying swans* of antiquity, than in those of youth and vigour[11]?"

The wild swan utters a sound which is described as a sort of whistling.

Mrs. King, p. 429.—Cowper's correspondent, Mrs. Margaret King, was daughter of the Rev. Hans Deveil and Margaretta Lydiat his wife. She was born in 1735, married to the Rev. John King in 1752, and died in 1795. The following memorandum exists in a MS. Autobiographical Diary of the late Professor Martyn. "Feb. 6, 1793. In the evening died my excellent friend, the eminently pious Margaret, above forty years wife to my cousin the Rev. John King, having supported a long and painful sickness with exemplary patience and resignation, in the fifty-eighth year of her age." She was interred within the chancel of Pertenhall Church.

The Rev. John King was eldest son of John King (the well-known editor of Euripides) by Lucy, daughter of Thomas Morice, Esq. He was born about 1724, and was contemporary with Cowper at Westminster School. He was entered of Bene't (now called Corpus) College, Cambridge, in 1741. graduated B.A. in 1745, and M.A. in 1748. His connection with Bene't, of which John Cowper was fellow, probably accounts for Mrs. King's being in possession of John Cowper's MS. poems in his own hand-writing. *That* copy appears to have been the only one in existence in 1788, for Cowper then expresses his delight in seeing it, his own copy having perished in the Temple. Though Cowper promised to return it, it does not appear among Mrs. King's papers, as they have descended to the Rev. John King Martyn. It is not improbable that Cowper was requested to consider the MS. as his own. In 1752 (in which year he married) Mr. King was instituted to the rectory of Pertenhall, Bedfordshire; that benefice he resigned in 1800, but continued to reside in the rectory with his cousin and successor in the living, Professor Martyn, till his death, Oct. 6, 1812. He was buried in the chancel at Pertenhall, under the communion table.—G. C. G.

Some account of Mr. King's grandfather, Dr. John King, rector of Chelsea, and of his writings, may be found in Mr. Gorham's Life of Professors John and Thomas Martyn, pp. 48-50.

The slave trade recommended as a subject to Cowper, p. 433.—When George Hardinge urged Miss Seward to write some verses upon this subject, she excused herself, but at the same time told him how she would have treated it, had she been disposed to undertake the task. "If," said she, "I had leisure for the Muses, which I have not,—if I had spirits, which I have not, to encounter the solicitudes of publication,—and if I thought, which I do not, that poetry could have any influence upon our

[10] *Encyc.* Art. *Voix.*

[11] Burney's Hist. of Music, vol. i. p. 191.

senators, to induce them to espouse the cause of liberty and mercy, in behalf of the negroes, I would demand if Africa has no benevolent genius? —if her nymphs and her river-gods are all besmeared with blood? I would make the naiads of Niger and Gambia complain of the human gore which pollutes their waves. I would try if I could not rummage out some black Muses, some sooty Graces, to sit upon the topmost stone of an high African mountain, listening to the groans of a thousand nations. I would make an execration from a sable river-god to a ship loaded with slaves, crammed together in its hold, whose groans and cries should, at intervals, like the sound of the death-bell in Mason's beautiful Elegy on Lady Coventry, interrupt the execration, or be a kind of returning chorus to it.

"That execration should be something like the Roman augur's to the legions of Crassus. I would call upon the Genius of England to remember what lustre the improved humanity of building hospitals, &c., has cast around his civic crown, and conjure him, by casting away the galling, and hitherto indissoluble chain, from the naked savage, toiling for him beneath torrid suns, to open a prospect of golden days to come.

'When the swart negroes, 'mid their palmy groves,
Might quaff the citron juice, and woo their sable loves.'

"Were I to write a poem on this popular subject, it would be on somewhat of the above plan; but the want of time, spirits, and faith, are in the opposite scale, and my sooty Muses and Graces kick the beam. How should the solemn mourners march through the gates of my versifying region, since neither leisure, vivacity or hope, are at hand to open them?

"Adieu!—may you never experience the absence of those gentlewomen-ushers to wit-making, verse-making, or love-making!"—*Letters*, vol. ii., p. 111—13.

END OF VOL. III.

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